

DYAL SINGH PUBLIC LIBRARY

ROUSE AVENUE, NEW DELHI-1

Class No. 823

Book No. R 227 C

Accession No. 4821

DYAL SINGH PUBLIC LIBRARY

ROUSE AVENUE, NEW DELHI-1.

Cl. No. 823

R 227 C

Ac. No.

4821

Date of release for loan

This book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below.
An overdue charge of 0.6 P. will be charged for each day the book
is kept overtime.

READER'S DIGEST

Condensed

BOOKS

Winter 1952 Selections



THE READER'S DIGEST ASSOCIATION
Pleasantville, N. Y.

The lines from "If," quoted in *Melville Goodwin, USA*, are from *Rewards and Fairies* by Rudyard Kipling. Copyright 1910 by Rudyard Kipling, reprinted by permission of Mrs. George Bambridge and Doubleday & Company, Inc.

The lines from "The Highwayman," also quoted in *Melville Goodwin, USA*, are from *Collected Poems in One Volume* by Alfred Noyes. Copyright 1906, 1934, 1947, by Alfred Noyes. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, J. B. Lippincott Company.

The condensations reprinted in this book
are used by permission of and special arrangement with
the publishers holding the respective copyrights

Copyright 1951 by The Reader's Digest Association,
Incorporated

FIRST EDITION

*All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce
this book or parts thereof in any form*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Contents

MELVILLE GOODWIN, USA

By John P. Marquand

PUBLISHED BY LITTLE, BROWN & CO.

Page 7

THE CRUEL SEA

By Nicholas Monsarrat

PUBLISHED BY ALFRED KNOPF, INC.

Page 253

A GENIUS IN THE FAMILY

By Hiram Percy Maxim

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS

Page 329

MONARCH OF GODDESS ISLAND

Condensed from THE PLUNDERERS

By Georges Blond

PUBLISHED BY THE MACMILLAN CO.

Page 365

TO CATCH A THIEF

By David Dodge

PUBLISHED BY RANDOM HOUSE, INC.

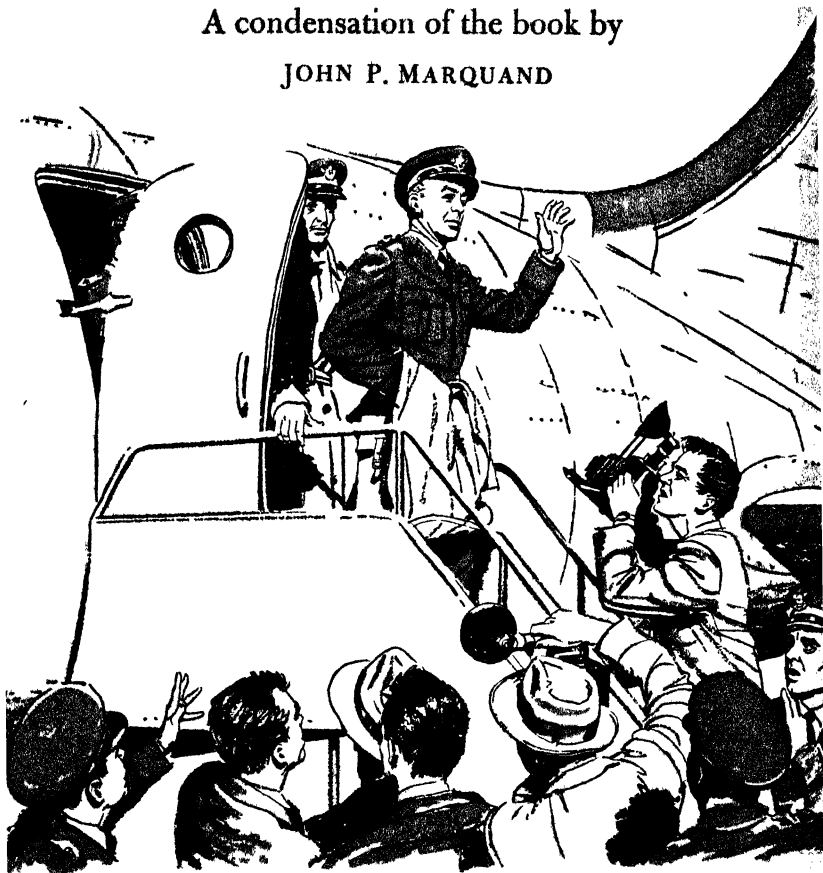
Page 397

Illustrations by Ed Vebell
Decorations by B. Brussel-Smith

Melville Goodwin, USA

A condensation of the book by

JOHN P. MARQUAND



Melville Goodwin, USA — copyright 1951 by John P. Marquand, copyright 1951 by John P. Marquand and Adelaide H. Marquand — is published at \$3.75 by Little, Brown & Co., 34 Beacon St., Boston 6, Mass.

MELVILLE GOODWIN, USA, is a two-star general, one of those remote, rugged combat commanders whose faces you see these days in newsreels from Europe and Korea. Isolated by rank and authority, he is a mysterious sort of person to civilians and even to the GIs he commands. John P. Marquand is the first major novelist to tell the compelling story of what such a man feels and thinks and of what life in the highest and loneliest echelons of the Army is really like today.

Stripped of his brass, Melville Goodwin is a man with very human problems. There is his career, headed straight for one of the highest posts in the Army—if he handles himself carefully. There is his loyal, ambitious wife, Muriel — but there is also glamorous Dottie Peale, who gets what she wants, and who wants the General. There is the General's friend Sidney Skelton, a topflight radio commentator whose own professional troubles provide an ironic counterpoint for Goodwin's dilemma.

Melville Goodwin, USA is the unforgettable portrait of a general who commanded a division in battle but could not command his own heart.

"*Melville Goodwin, USA* shows Marquand at the top of his form as storyteller and subtle satirist of American life." — Edmund Fuller in Chicago *Sunday Tribune*

"The best and most rewarding of all of Marquand's books."

— Harrison Smith in *The Saturday Review of Literature*

CHAPTER 1

*You Will Love Its Full, Exciting Flavor
... and Now, Mr. Sidney Skelton*

I KNEW nothing at all about what General Melville A. Goodwin had done in Berlin until I read of his feat in my own script shortly before going on the air one evening in October 1949.

Because of a luncheon engagement in New York that day, I broadcasted from the New York studio instead of from my library in Connecticut. I entered the building at approximately six and, while waiting for the elevator, I noticed that a personally conducted group of tourists had gathered behind me. They had all bought tickets for a quick trip through the works and they were being guided by one of the studio ushers, a nice fresh-faced boy dressed in a tailless coat of Confederate-gray and gold.

"Just about to enter the car ahead of us," I heard the boy say, "is Mr. Sidney Skelton, the commentator. He goes on the air at seven o'clock." There was a low excited murmur, and I still had perspective enough to be embarrassed by this sort of thing.

At the 37th floor there was another boy in gray and gold who also knew me.

"Good evening, Mr. Skelton," he said.

"Good evening, son," I answered.

The boy looked very happy and proud in his gray monkey jacket. He made me wish that I, too, were his age, dressed up like a Roxy usher, instead of the synthetic personality I had become.

Miss Maynard, my studio secretary, was waiting for me. "Good evening, Mr. Skelton," she said. "It's going to be in Studio A. Mr. Frary hopes you don't mind."

MELVILLE GOODWIN, USA

Miss Maynard meant that I was to read the script in the studio into which the public could stare through soundproof glass. I might have told her that it made no difference where I read the thing. I had read it from the top of Pike's Peak and from the ballroom of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo and from the press box of the Rose Bowl in Pasadena. The success of the program lay in my voice and not my brains, and in an accepted tradition I was being turned into a world traveler who appeared in odd places gathering material. I was not even encouraged to give much thought to the preparation of the script myself, because it was my voice and personality that they wanted. Art Hertz, who usually put the piece together for me, knew radio technique. I could trust him for the timing and I could trust his balance of language, too, but still, I did like to read the whole thing over first instead of taking it on cold. After all, the latest sponsor was paying close to a million dollars for the program.

"If Mr. Hertz is anywhere around, I'd better see him," I said.

If we were going on in Studio A, I would have to read without glasses, so I should go over the script carefully. I unbuttoned my vest and took a sip of the soda water provided for me.

"Hello, Sid," Art said.

"Hello, Art," I answered. "Let's see what you have."

Art Hertz was a very able script writer; so good, in fact, that it had occurred to me that it might be wise if I spent a day in the newsroom myself.

I picked up the script.

It began with the usual salutation, "Good evening, friends," but the next words startled me.

"What's this?" I asked. "I didn't know we were close to war today."

"Didn't you?" Art said. "Haven't you read the evening papers?"

There was no time to be ironical. It was 6:33.

"Good evening, friends," I read. "We were close to war this

afternoon. The long-dreaded flare-up occurred today on the border of the Russian sector in Berlin. We know tonight that war was averted by the clear thinking of one American soldier. What is this soldier's name? You will hear it everywhere tonight. The name is Melville A. Goodwin, Major General Melville Goodwin, whom you might call a GI's general. . . ."

"Oh, no!" I said. "Not Mel Goodwin."

"Do you know him?" Art asked.

"Yes," I said, "I know him."

"I am sorry I didn't know that," Art said. "It would have warmed the whole thing up, but maybe we can wangle ten more seconds."

I should have been there earlier. As it was, there was only time for one excision in the script and a single insert: "This all fits my old friend, Mel Goodwin, to a T, the Mel Goodwin I met when he was commanding his armored division before the breakout at Saint-Lô—none of the stiffness, none of the protocol which one associates with big brass. It's like him to want his friends to call him Mel."

Little warm bits like this, the statistical department had discovered, were apt to boost the Crosley rating.

THE TROUBLE in Berlin had started, I learned, when a Russian patrol picked up a drunken American private who had wandered across the line and an American patrol had appeared a second later and grabbed a Russian sergeant. The Russians began readying their Tommy guns and the American lieutenant got rattled. There had been a good chance that somebody would shoot when Mel Goodwin walked around the corner with a correspondent from the Associated Press.

When Mel Goodwin saw the trouble, as he told me later, he walked into the middle of the street and halted in front of the Russian officer, who pointed a Tommy gun at his stomach. The Russian was a rawboned gangling boy who looked very nervous.

In fact, everyone was very nervous. Mel Goodwin never knew whether or not the Russians recognized his rank. It may have been his age, he said, that influenced the outcome, or it may have only been his knowing that troops are troops in any army and that all troops act alike. Anyway, he stood in front of the Russian officer for a second or two, he said, looking at the Tommy gun, and then he lighted a cigarette.

"Then I pushed that gun away from my stomach," he said, "and gave the boy a friendly slap on the tail."

That was all there was to the incident, Mel said. No one had wanted to start shooting, and the slap on the tail broke the tension.

He laughed and the Russian laughed and then they shook hands and the Russian sergeant was swapped off for the American drunk. No one would have given it another thought if it had not been for the presence of the AP correspondent. He did not prevent any war, Mel Goodwin said later. He did not know anything about the publicity until orders came over the teletype for him to return immediately to Washington. Nobody outside the Army until then had ever heard much of Major General Melville Goodwin.

I HAVE often wondered why any thoughts of mine should have lingered on Mel Goodwin that evening after the broadcast was over. I had only met him briefly in Normandy, and then there had been one rather ridiculous interlude in Paris when he had made an off-the-record ass of himself with my old friend Dottie Peale. It was even difficult to separate his face or words from those of other American generals. From my observation, professional generals looked alike, thought alike and reacted in an identical manner. They had all dropped some factor in the human equation as soon as they rated a car with one of those flags on it and a chauffeur and an aide to get them cigarettes. After the first flush of excitement which came from knowing them,

the best thing to do, I always thought, was to keep as far away from them as possible and to drink and play cards with lower members of the staff. *Attention! Here comes the General. We were just playing a little bridge, sir. Would the General care to take a hand?*

Nevertheless, I was thinking of Mel Goodwin's story when Art Hertz and I went into Gilbert Frary's office after the broadcast. Gilbert was in official charge of the program and he acted as liaison between the studio and the sponsor.

"How do you think it went, Gilbert?" Art asked.

It occurred to me that Art had been pushing himself around recently more than was necessary. It was up to me, not Art, to ask that question.

"Frankly," Gilbert said, "at first I was a little disappointed. That whole Berlin business seemed exaggerated. But you warmed it up very nicely, Sidney. That's interesting that you knew the General. What is he really like?"

"He's like all the rest of them," I said. "Nobody ought to try to warm them up."

The telephone rang and Gilbert reached for it eagerly. "Yes," he said, "yes, George. I'm glad you liked it, George. I thought it was well balanced, and I thought Sidney put a lot into it." He hung up the telephone. "Well," he said, "George Burtheimer likes it, and George isn't like other sponsors. He doesn't often call up. Shall we go somewhere and eat?"

"I'm just having a sandwich in the office, Gilbert," I said. "I ought to start back home."

"You'll be doing it from home tomorrow, will you?"

"Yes," I said, "if that's all right with you, Gilbert."

"It's all right," Gilbert said. "There's value in the illusion of your moving around. I wish you'd think about going out to the West Coast again with me next month. People like to see you, and the customers always enjoy hearing something from Hollywood."

It had only come over me recently how ironic the relationship was that existed among Gilbert Frary and Art Hertz and me, though Art was only on the edge of it. You could always get another writer, but Gilbert and I were like two boys running a three-legged race at a Sunday School picnic, tied together, our arms about each other's shoulders. No matter what we thought of each other we had to love each other; we had to stick together.

Gilbert was looking at me affectionately now, yet in a speculative way that I could appreciate. He had made me what I was today.

Gilbert had picked my voice out of the air one night. He was just sitting casually in his suite at the St. Regis before going to the theater, and for no good reason he had turned his radio to a program from London put on by Army Public Relations shortly after V-E Day. My job with SHAEF at the time had consisted of personally conducting Very Important People to very important points of interest, and I had been ordered to introduce some of these personages on the air. Sitting in his suite at the St. Regis, Gilbert had been impressed by my voice. It had new quality, he said, freshness and integrity.

"Sidney," he used to say when he told the story, and he had been telling it more and more often recently, "would you mind saying a few words, just anything, so that everyone can understand what I mean. . . . You see what I mean now, don't you? Sidney's a natural. His words stand out and at the same time hang together, and you see what I mean by his timing? It all makes up into what I call integrity. Sidney's voice is what Spencer Tracy and Gary Cooper are in the movies photogenically."

When Gilbert continued along those lines, it was best to listen to him as little as possible, but at any rate he had made me what I was. Another man, even an agent, would have left the St. Regis, gone to the theater and forgotten all about it, but Gilbert called up Washington, and now there we were, four years later.

"Well, good-bye, Sidney," Gilbert said. "By the way, Marie and

I are giving one of our Sunday-night suppers for George Burtheimer. He'll be in from Chicago. Just a few interesting people. I think Spencer may be with us. He's coming on from the Coast."

"That sounds wonderful," I said, "but I'll have to ask Helen. I don't know what Helen's planned for Sunday."

A year ago I would have simply said it sounded wonderful, and Gilbert knew it. The trouble was he had done too well with me. He had made me into a Frankenstein creation which might move out of his control. He now had to guard against my becoming a monster. My voice had too much integrity.

"That new chauffeur of yours is working out all right, isn't he, Sidney?" Gilbert asked.

"Yes, Gilbert," I said, "he's wonderful."

"I am glad the new chauffeur and the Cadillac are working out, Sidney," Gilbert said. "Well, so long. We must have a good long talk some day soon, the way we used to."

For a long while I had been struggling with an increasing sense of being far removed from everything which I had hitherto considered real. Quite suddenly I had been relieved of most of my old ambitions as well as of nearly every species of material want. It was all disorienting — the corridors with the ushers, the air-conditioned purity which banished even a puff of cigarette smoke, my own gay office, my secretary, who was very beautiful like all the front-row company secretaries, and certainly Gilbert Frary.

"Sidney," Gilbert had said to me once, "this all — I mean what has happened to you, if you understand me — must seem to you like a fairy story, coming as suddenly as it has. If you were to write down what has happened to you, it would be unbelievable."

"You mean," I asked, "that truth is stranger than fiction?"

"You know I'm not as obvious as that, Sidney," Gilbert said. "I mean that few episodes in real life fit snugly into a fictional frame. Willie Maugham told me that once."

"I thought his name was just W. Somerset Maugham," I said.

"His friends call him Willie," Gilbert said. "You would like each other because you have one great trait in common."

"All right," I said, "what trait?"

"Integrity," Gilbert said. "Both you and Willie have great integrity, and what is more, you have something else that is even more valuable. You have loyalty, Sidney, great loyalty."

"If you mean I recognize all you've done for me and that I won't let you down . . ." I began.

"I know you won't let me down," Gilbert said, "and that's why I'll always love you, Sidney."

Perhaps he would always love me, but I knew he would let me down at any moment if it would do him any good.

MISS MAYNARD was waiting for me when I stopped in to get my sandwich.

"A call has just come in for you, Mr. Skelton," she said.

"I thought all calls were going to be stopped."

"I know," Miss Maynard said, "but this was personal. She said you would want to speak to her. It's Mrs. Peale."

"Oh, all right," I said, and I picked up the telephone. "Hello, Dottie."

"Hello," Dottie said, "how's your voice?"

"It's fine," I said. "It's got me a chauffeur and a Cadillac."

"How's your integrity?" Dottie asked.

"It's fine," I said, "how's yours?"

There was a second's silence, as though she was thinking of something.

"Darling, how about your dropping everything and taking me out to dinner?"

"I can't," I said. "Helen's expecting me, but I'd like to some other time, Dottie."

There was another hesitation, not exactly a silence. I knew she did not want me to take her to dinner and that she wanted something else.

"Darling," she said, "I just heard you on the air. Isn't it wonderful about Mel?"

"Oh — Mel," I repeated, and she laughed.

"Don't be so vague, darling," she said.

"If you want his address," I said, "I don't know it, or his number."

"Oh, Sid," she said, "don't you know anything about him?"

"Why don't you leave that poor old guy alone?" I said. "He'll look different over here."

"Don't be so censorious," she said. "When can I see you?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Darling," she said, "how about lunch on Monday?"

CHAPTER 2

*So Jolly Boys Now . . . Here's God Speed
the Plough . . . Long Life and Success to
the Farmer*

GILBERT FRARY had always handled my contracts until recently, when I had been having the whole business checked by an independent law firm. Gilbert had been deeply hurt when he found that I had been doing this, because, he said, his own lawyers were protecting us. At any rate, in the latest contract there was a large appropriation for travel and business entertainment outside of salary, a Cadillac car, "or any other motor in this general price range," and "a responsible and adequate chauffeur." Somehow even our house in Connecticut had entered into the transaction.

Until the year 1939, except for a rented room in Boston and a two-room walk-up in New York, I had never lived in a home of my own. If there had been anything that approached a home in

my youth, it was the run-down farm which my Uncle Will had bought outside of Nashua, N. H., when he had retired as manager of one of the smaller textile mills in that city. When I was in my teens I was there often, and the farm was always more of a home to me than the rented stucco house in West Newton where I lived as a child. When my mother died and I had been boarded for a while with family friends, it was like home when I went to stay with my Uncle Will. When my father married again, there never seemed to be room for me in the new household and that element of security which child psychologists now consider of such importance was denied me. Nevertheless when I finished college and went to work on a Boston paper, I seldom missed the solidity of home, and I never cared much about possessions. And when I was on the Paris bureau, I never wanted to buy anything even there, except possibly a few books from the stalls along the Seine.

I returned to New York in 1939 after writing three magazine articles on the Middle East and I still did not care where I ate or slept until I married Helen. She was an assistant editor then, on a home-furnishings magazine. We rented four rooms in the West 50's and even when Camilla was born in the winter of 1940 and was moved into the back bedroom with her bottles and her bathtub, we were not used to the apartment. We left it in 1941, when I joined the Army and Helen and Camilla went to live with Helen's parents in Delaware. We never did have a home in the accepted sense until suddenly in the spring of 1949 we bought the place in Connecticut called Savin Hill.

Helen had said that now we could afford it we ought to think about Camilla and move to the country. Besides, Gilbert Frary felt we should consider the personality value of such a change. Helen and Camilla and I needed a gracious, welcoming home that would look like something — something solid, perhaps with horses.

"Why horses?" I asked.

Gilbert said that he had merely suggested horses because they had a social significance that built up personality.

"Not that you haven't a lovely personality as it is, Sidney," he said, "but Helen knows what I mean."

He meant that we must have roots somewhere that had a build-up value, and it ought to be Connecticut, not Long Island, because Long Island was rootless. He said larger country places were going begging now, and most of the upkeep could come out of the expense account.

Savin Hill, from the first moment I saw it, was a sort of sword of Damocles for me. Day and night the spirit of the place hung over me by a thread, a perpetual reminder of the existence of material instability. The house had been built by a Mr. Edgar Winlock, who had died very suddenly from a coronary attack, and it was up for sale, furnished, to settle the estate. It was built along the lines of a Virginia plantation. A shaded avenue led up to it with fields resembling paddocks or pastures on either side, enclosed by deceptively simple white board fences. The place was trying to look like a farm, but the driveway had a rolled tar surface.

"You see, the Winlocks kept horses," Helen said. "There's a stable and a three-car garage."

"Good Lord, Helen —" I began, but she stopped me.

"We can afford it, Sid," she said. "Gilbert says we can" — she was pathetically eager to have me like it — "and a couple and an upstairs maid can look after the house." She had learned all about such arrangements, of course, from working with fashion magazines, and from writing pieces about gracious living.

"All right," I said, "I'm Mr. Edgar Winlock. Do the horses come with it, Mrs. Winlock?"

WHEN THE Cadillac drew up at Savin Hill that October evening, the door opened as though the sound of the car horn had released some electronic mechanism. There was Oscar, the house-

man, in the tan alpaca coat that Helen had selected for him, smiling in his mannerly Swedish way.

"There has just been a telephone call for you, sir," Oscar said, "from Washington. A Colonel Flax from Public Relations. He asked for you to call him back the moment you came in. He said it was very urgent."

Everything, I remembered, was always urgent in Public Relations, but I was not in the Army any longer and I had never heard of Colonel Flax.

"If he wants me badly enough, he can try me again," I said.

Helen was standing in the hall waiting for me and she looked very happy and very pretty.

"Hi," I said. "How's everything going, Mrs. Winlock?"

This was a joke which had worn pretty thin by now, as I saw by Helen's changed expression.

"I am sorry," I said. "It just happened unintentionally," and I kissed her.

"You sounded wonderful," Helen said. "Did you write it or did Art write it?"

"Art wrote it," I said, "except the piece about my knowing that general. He didn't know I knew Mel Goodwin."

"I didn't know you knew him, either," Helen said, "but it sounded wonderful. Now you had better go up and see Camilla so she can get to sleep. She's in bed with a book waiting for you, and she really ought to be asleep by nine."

Camilla was sitting straight up in bed reading Louisa M. Alcott's *Little Women* for the third time, and her black hair fell over her shoulders in two neat braids. I stood there for a moment adjusting myself to her. I could remember her in her crib, but I had been away so much during the war that I was still surprised that Camilla could talk fluently or that she could have ideas.

"Well," I said, "what did you do at school today?"

"The same old things," Camilla said. "Let's talk about something else. Talk about when you were a little boy."

Her round gray-green eyes, just the color of her mother's, were fixed on me with that utterly uninhibited stare of childhood.

"Well," I said, "when I was a little boy I lived in West Newton."

"Did you have a dog?" Camilla asked.

"No," I said, "I didn't, but I did have a pair of roller skates."

Somewhere in the distance the horns of elfland mingled with the loud metallic sound of those roller skates.

"I wish I had some roller skates," Camilla said. "What else did you have?"

I tried to think what else I had. "Now let me think," I said. "I had a pocketknife. It had a chain on it and one end of the chain I could fasten on a button inside my trousers."

"What sort of a button?" Camilla asked.

She had completely broken my train of thought. "I don't remember, Camilla, but there was a button somewhere."

"What did your mother do about you when you went to bed?" Camilla asked.

What did my mother do about me when I went to bed? I could see my mother's face quite clearly. It had always looked drawn and pale in the evening, though I must have been completely oblivious to her worries. I had seen her once just as Camilla now saw me.

"Well," I said, "she always made me wash."

"Didn't your nurse wash you?"

"No," I said, "there wasn't any nurse."

"Did she hear you say your prayers?"

"Yes," I said, "when she wasn't too tired. She wasn't very well."

"What did you say?" Camilla asked. "'Now I lay me' or 'Our Father'?"

"I guess it was 'Our Father,'" I said.

"All right," Camilla said, "then I'll say that one."

"Wait a minute," I said. "Hasn't your mother heard your

prayers?" But Camilla did not wait. She was out of bed and kneeling beside me. Her pigtails made two straight lines on her flannelette pajamas.

"Our Father who art in heaven . . ." she began, hastily, as though she might forget it all if she spoke too slowly.

"Daddy," she said, when she was in bed again, "I think I'm going to lose a tooth."

"Well," I said, "that's fine, Camilla," and I thought of the last tooth I lost in West Newton two weeks before my mother's death, and no one had done anything about that tooth.

CHAPTER 3

And Mr. Gilbert Frary Has Another Good Suggestion

As I crossed the hall that evening and entered the living room, Helen seemed a long distance away, curled up on the corner of the davenport, looking at the fire. She looked like a Pre-Raphaelite painting in a velvet gown that was neither a housecoat nor a negligee nor a dinner dress. She was so exactly what I had wanted that our marriage sometimes seemed like a gay sort of interlude, an unexpected piece of good fortune that should be taken at the flood and remembered in drab days that were bound to follow.

Helen had done the living room over, because Savin Hill should be in our own taste. I was a little vague about our own taste because we had never been surrounded by any old possessions. Helen and I had never had anything but a few books and the silver-backed comb and brush in our dressing room, which her mother had given her when we were married. Now there were English drum tables and piecrust tables, and heavy curtains

called *toile de Jouy* drawn across the tall windows, and the strange thing about it was that the room actually looked as though we lived in it instead of looking, as I thought it would, like one of those period rooms in the Metropolitan Museum. I never could understand how Helen had achieved this effect.

As far as I could see, Helen's background did not fit her for her present efforts any better than my own. When I had known her first, she had shared a two-room apartment in New York with a heavy, red-faced girl whom she had known at Bryn Mawr, and they had cooked casserole dishes on a hot plate in the bathroom. The house occupied by her parents in Wilmington, Del., was a smallish brick structure with gas fixtures wired for electricity and a narrow dark front hall in which there stood a combination hatrack and umbrella stand of golden oak. Nothing about that house in Delaware afforded an explanation for her ability to cope successfully with her present surroundings.

"Darling," she said as I came in, "I wish you would look more natural. Why don't you ring for Oscar and get your slippers and your smoking jacket?"

"Well," I said, because I did not want to hurt her feelings, "all right, Helen, I'll settle for the smoking jacket but not the slippers. Why do you think it makes me look natural?"

"It doesn't," Helen said, "but it ought to." and she looked at me as though she were doing me over. "It might if you kept wearing it."

I did not ring for Oscar to bring me the smoking jacket and I don't believe that Helen expected that I would. One of the best things about her was that she was never nagging or insistent. Instead, I picked up a copy of the *New York Times*, unbuttoned my double-breasted coat and loosened my tie and sat down at one end of the davenport. Helen picked up the piece of petit-point embroidery on which she had been working. There was no sound in the room but the occasional snapping of the oak logs in the fireplace. Helen had always understood the value of silence.

Somewhere down the hall I heard the gentle opening and closing of a door.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Oh," Helen said, "it's Oscar sending in Farouche to say good night."

Farouche was our gray poodle. He was trimmed in the modern Airedale manner, and the fur on top of his cranium was tied together by a fresh red bow. Nevertheless Farouche did not look silly. He entered the room in a dignified manner without bouncing or slobbering, carrying a rubber ring in his mouth. He glanced at us both, pleasantly and expectantly, and assumed an alert sitting position in front of us.

"Hello, Farouche, darling," Helen said.

Farouche edged nearer, still holding his rubber ring.

"Aren't you going to play with him?" Helen asked.

Farouche had a one-track mind, and the ring was his obsession. When I got up from the davenport and approached him, he dropped it carelessly, but he always snatched it again before I could pick it up, and he was delighted by my clumsiness. In the end, Farouche was very generous with me. He deliberately allowed me to get the ring so that I could toss it across the room.

"He's very gracious tonight," I said, "and I like his new bow."

"He isn't gracious," Helen said. "He loves us."

I never understood why people take a dog's love for granted. Farouche's mind was on his rubber ring. He knew that I had given up, but there was always hope that I would try to snatch his ring again.

"My God," I said, "we seem a long way from anywhere tonight."

Helen looked up at me quickly.

"Where's anywhere?" she asked.

"Anywhere is where we used to be," I said.

"Darling, what got your mind on this?" Helen said. "You were just playing with Farouche."

"That's exactly it," I said. "I never thought I'd own a poodle with a bowknot on his head."

"I wish you wouldn't try to make him into a symbol," Helen said. "Don't you like him?"

Of course, I said, I liked him. I had not intended to discuss our life, but there we were. Helen was sitting up straighter and she was speaking more carefully.

"Well," she said, "you got us here. I didn't. We ought to put that on the record, and we have to be somewhere like this."

"All right," I said. "I know. It just happened, but I can't help feeling queer."

"Now, Sid," Helen said, "of course we're strangers here but all the neighbors have come to call on us. They're all very nice, and we're being taken into the Country Club."

"They're all different," I said.

"Darling," Helen said, and there was a catch in her voice, "don't you like *anything* you're doing?"

It was impossible to answer yes or no to her question. I liked to use my editorial judgment on Art's script and to work myself over the dispatches from the newsroom, but at the same time I hated the show-business side of it. I did not like having been discovered and turned suddenly into an overnight wonder like a Hollywood star. It was uncomfortable being accidentally successful for no sound or adequate reason.

There was a cough in the hall.

"Hello," I said. "What's the problem, Oscar?"

"I came to take Farouche to bed, sir," Oscar said, "and there's the same gentleman on the telephone again from Washington, a Colonel Edward Flax."

"I'll take it in the library," I said.

The telephone stood on the tooled-leather surface of the Old English desk on which the microphones were set up when I went on the air at home. I was still sure that I did not know anyone named Flax.

"Hello," I said. "This is Mr. Skelton speaking."

"Good evening, Mr. Skelton. This is Colonel Flax. I am sorry to trouble you so late at night. I'm in Public Relations at the Pentagon — General Todd's office — your former chief."

"Oh, yes," I said.

"The General would have called you himself," Colonel Flax said, "but unfortunately he is delivering an address before the American Legion tonight. He speaks of you very often and about the old days in Paris."

"Well, now, that's very kind of him," I said. "Tell the General I think of him often, too. I hope he doesn't still suffer from indigestion."

"He brought up your name himself this evening," Colonel Flax said. "When we were in conference with the Secretary. The General was wondering, and the Secretary concurred, whether, because of your continued interest in the Army and also because of your closeness to General Melville Goodwin, — er — whether you couldn't help out on a little job. I wish I could talk to you personally. If it's agreeable to you, I can come up to New York the first thing in the morning."

The Colonel was speaking with an anxiety which communicated itself to me.

"Well," I said, "you're right — I have a warm spot in my heart for the Army. But exactly what is it that General Todd wants me to do?"

"Well, frankly," Colonel Flax said, "it's about Major General Goodwin. You can understand that he presents a public-relations problem that must be handled in just the right way, and quite frankly, the personnel here isn't what it was during the war. We haven't the same old first team any more. They're all with the Air Force and the Marines, and this time the Ground Forces are carrying the ball."

"All right," I said, "but I still don't know why General Goodwin's a problem."



"This incident in Berlin," the colonel said, "and the way the whole picture is placed before the public. General Goodwin's flying back to the States tonight for press interviews and possibly for reassignment. He'll be in Washington tomorrow morning to report at the Pentagon, but we are planning to send him up to New York directly. He should be at Mitchel Field at two tomorrow afternoon."

With Congress in session and appropriations coming up, the Army wanted to use the Goodwin episode for all it was worth, Colonel Flax was saying. There was a fine play already, and the news magazines wanted a definitive story. The General was a new personality.

"We don't want him to say the wrong thing," Colonel Flax was saying. "If you could just manage to be with him to give him a little good advice, especially after those fine things you said about him in your broadcast tonight. His wife is riding up with him from Washington and all the sound reels will be there. In the conference it was suggested that you might be willing to meet him at Mitchel."

It all went to show what might happen if you spoke rashly on the air. Suddenly, because of a bright thought of mine that evening, I was the old friend of Melville Goodwin, the GI's general, right in there with him pitching.

"Before going to you direct," the colonel was saying, "we got in touch with the broadcasting company and we've been talking to Mr. Gilbert Frary, who concurs in the idea. He also suggests that you ask General and Mrs. Goodwin to be your guests for a day or two at your home in Connecticut."

I looked up from the telephone to find that Helen had entered the library, and from her expression I was sure that she had been listening over some extension.

"Now, just a minute," I said. "I haven't heard a word from Mr. Frary, and I'm too busy tomorrow to go to Mitchel Field."

There was a deflated silence, and I wished that Gilbert Frary

would mind his own business — but perhaps it was his own business, since it was as necessary for me as it was for General Goodwin to be a seven days' wonder.

"I'll send my car for him," I said, "and if they're going to do a definitive piece about him, they can come out and work on it here, but I'm not going to meet him at Mitchel Field."

I should have said that I would have nothing to do with it, but I had already begun to feel sorry for General Melville Goodwin.

"Now, Sid," Helen said, "there was no earthly reason for you to ask them up here."

Before I could answer, Oscar had opened the library door.

"Don't tell me. I can guess," I said. "It's Mr. Frary on the telephone." I smiled at Helen. "You'd better listen in the hall."

"How is everything in Connecticut, Sid?" Gilbert asked. "Sid, did an Army officer at the Pentagon get in touch with you about that general, General Goodman?"

"That's right," I said, "he's just been on the wire."

"Well, I thought he had some rather good suggestions, didn't you? I told him you had great loyalty to old associations."

"That's right," I said, "loyalty."

"I knew we'd see eye to eye," Gilbert said. "Then you'll be down at the airport and I'll have flowers from you for Mrs. Goodman, and perhaps you can think of some slightly comical favor for General Goodman, something that will look amusing in a picture. How would a floral hammer and sickle be, or maybe perhaps you present him with a Tommy gun, muzzle foremost, something with a laugh to lighten up the newsreels, Sid?"

"Now, Gilbert," I said, "let's quiet down. I'm not going to Mitchel Field."

"Now, Sidney," Gilbert said, "I appreciate your reaction perfectly, but before deciding definitely, please give it a second thought. It may be better to have the ceremony somewhat more dignified, such as a simple frank handclasp and a word or two — but I do feel, without the slightest ambiguity, that this is all a

real build-up for the program. If Helen can't make it, there will be another lovely lady there."

"Who?" I asked. "The General's wife?"

"No, no, Sid," Gilbert said, "but you know who — someone in your past and General Goodman's past. You know who."

"Goodwin!" I said. "Not Goodman — Goodwin."

"I wish I had your sharp-etched memory, Sidney," Gilbert said. "I've been talking about General Goodwin with someone who is intensely interested in him. You know who."

"Don't make me guess," I said. "Who is it?"

"Now, Sid," Gilbert said, "don't be so ambiguous. It's Dottie Peale, Sidney."

"Listen, Gilbert," I said, "I wouldn't have Dottie if Mrs. Goodwin is coming."

"Oh-oh," Gilbert said. "Does that convey an implication?"

"You put it very nicely, Gilbert," I said.

"I cannot see how I was so inopportune," Gilbert said. "You mean he's seriously that way about Dottie?"

"He was the last time I saw him," I said, "but he was under strain, Gilbert. We were all under strain."

"Oh-oh," Gilbert said. "I love the way you put things, Sidney — so completely devoid of ambiguity."

"All right," I said, "how about our going to sleep now, Gilbert? I'm not going to the field, but I'm sending for him. I'm asking him to stay here."

"I wish I had your restrained taste, Sidney," Gilbert said. "The gesture has so much more integrity, and you can broadcast from your library tomorrow night with the General beside you, and some photographs. I'll arrange the whole thing, Sidney, and it will all be studio expense. Tell Helen not to worry."

I looked up to discover that Helen was still in the library.

"Helen won't worry," I said. "Helen loves parties. Call us in the morning. Good night, Gilbert."

Helen stood scowling at me and I laughed. "I don't see what

you think is so funny," she said. "What are you laughing at?"

"About the General," I said, "my old close friend, Mel Goodwin."

"Sid," Helen said, "you never told me about the General and Dottie Peale. Was it that time you took all those writers and people over in a plane?"

"Yes," I said, "it was that time, but it doesn't amount to anything, Helen. You know Dottie Peale."

"Well, as long as it was the General and not you," Helen said.

CHAPTER 4

If Necessary, She Would Have Done Very Well in Iceland

HAD first met Dottie when she was make-up girl for the special-feature pages, and we had seen a lot of each other when we both worked down on Park Row. Right from the start Dottie had been an ambitious girl, and it did not take her long to find that I did not answer her requirements. She wanted an older man with money and sophistication. She also wanted power, and the combination of these desires afforded the best explanation for her marriage to Henry Peale, the publisher, a few weeks after I left to join the Paris bureau. Henry was very sweet, she said when I had dinner at their enormous house in the East 70's the first time I came back from Paris. Henry was very sweet, but he needed his night's rest. Henry would not mind at all our going out somewhere and dancing, and after we had got back to 72nd Street at two o'clock in the morning, she knew that Henry would not mind my kissing her good night because Henry knew that we knew each other so well — almost like brother and sister—well, perhaps not quite like brother and sister, but almost.

"Sid," Helen said again when we were upstairs, "what was it about Dottie Peale and the General?"

It was a long story, but Helen wanted to hear it all, and I was still telling her about it long after the lights were out in the largest master bedroom at Savin Hill.

IN February 1945 I had been obliged to cross the Atlantic with Dottie and a peculiarly ill-assorted group of literary and publishing geniuses in an Army C-54. I never knew who thought up this particular stunt or why I should have been sent back to Washington from the European Theater of Operations to take those people over; but obviously someone must have suggested that a group of writers who represented the arts, not the papers, ought to see at firsthand what the war was about in order to appreciate the effort that the Ground Forces, not the Air Force or the Navy, were making to win the war.

I did not like anything about the project and I was particularly unimpressed by the Very Important People who had been rounded up for the tour. These consisted of two male novelists of whom I had never heard, three female novelists, a short-story writer, two motion-picture scenario writers who called themselves dramatists and some publishers and subeditors of magazines. I was introduced to them all at a cocktail party given at a Washington hotel by Army Public Relations, and I was so busy trying to remember each name and face that I was not in the least prepared to meet Dottie Peale. I had written her when Henry Peale died, but I had not seen her since the beginning of the war. She was wearing a very smart twill traveling suit, and she had the cryptically bored look that she always assumed when she was out of her element.

"Why, darling!" Dottie said. "What are you doing here?"

I explained my assignment and I thought she was going to kiss me, but she must have decided it was not the time or place.

"Thank heaven, you're going with us," she said. "Who are all

these dreadful people? There isn't anybody in this crowd I want to be killed with except you."

"You're not going to be killed, Dot," I told her.

"I have a premonition," she said. "It's been growing on me all afternoon. Not that I'm afraid. I'm perfectly glad to die."

"Well, that's swell," I said. "If it happens, it will all be over very quickly."

"Sid," she asked, "on the plane — will you sit beside me?"

"Some of the time," I said, "but I'm a cruise director."

"Darling," she said, "you do look wonderful in a uniform. How's Helen? Are you happy with her?"

"Why, yes, up to the present," I said, and she smiled at me as though she were sure I could not be happy with Helen.

"Sid," she said, "doesn't it seem queer to meet this way? It's as though it meant something."

"Possibly," I said.

"Oh, damn it," she said. "Go and get me a drink."

We always knew each other too well to be fooled by each other. Nevertheless I was very glad to see her.

It had been a long while since I had been in love with Dottie Peale, if ever, and the same was true with her. On that Atlantic flight in the last winter of the war we were critical and at the same time fond of each other, and it did not matter whether or not we called a spade a spade.

"It's nice to talk to you, darling," Dottie said. "We see everything in the same way without anything's ever getting anywhere. I'm awfully sick of relationships that inevitably end up in bed."

"That's a lovely way of putting it," I said. "You make me see exactly what you mean."

"Well, we might end up that way," she said. "I wouldn't mind particularly."

"That's very sweet of you," I said, "but don't let it worry you, Dot."

"Don't be so complacent, darling," Dottie said. "I could make

you fall in love with me any time I wanted, especially racketing around on a junket like this. God, what a lot of freaks there are on this plane!"

When the passengers climbed up the steps in the frigid dark after the stop at Gander, I found Dottie a seat over the wing, and after the flight engineer and I had arranged blankets and safety belts before the take-off, I took the seat beside her. While the lights were still on, she applied lipstick, efficiently and savagely, like someone preparing to die in the grand manner.

"Does everything sound all right?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "Everything sounds fine."

We did not speak for a while, and I thought she was asleep.

"Sid," she said, "I wonder what everything's been about."

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Are you still dying?"

"Suppose I am," she said. "I've always wanted to amount to something, and that's more than you ever have. If you'd ever had any ambition, we might have been married. I could have done a lot for you. I wish I'd ever been able to find a man!"

"Well, you've done a certain amount of investigating," I told her, "and you did find Henry Peale."

"There you go," she said. "You think I married Henry for his money."

"Yes," I said, "that's exactly what I think."

"Well, maybe you're right," she said, "but Henry was awfully sweet. He understood me."

Instead of answering, I listened to the motors.

"I told you not to go over to Paris," she said. "You didn't really think I'd wait around for you, did you, after you went to Paris?"

"No," I said, "not for a single minute."

"Well, at least we did have a lot of good times together."

"Yes," I said, "we had quite a lot of fun."

"Well, don't say it in such a disagreeable way."

Everyone was asleep except the crew. There was nothing to Dottie in the dark except the intensity of her slightly husky voice

and the scent of the Chanel Five she had used even when she was working for \$40 a week, and except also an aura of physical cleanliness and resilience. Without seeing her at all, you could feel her strength and her unbroken confidence.

"All right," she said, "all right. Maybe I have done some investigating. You can't help learning a lot about men when they are always making swan dives at you, darling. I'll tell you what I've learned about men."

"Don't," I said, "or I'll tell you what I've learned about women."

I found myself sitting up straighter and listening. One of the port motors had missed, but then it picked up again.

"You never learned anything about women from me that didn't make you disagreeable and conceited," she said, "but I'll tell you about men. Most men are stupid and incompetent. You aren't stupid, darling, but you're incompetent. You were never able to write as good a news story as I could, and you can't handle people. I wish I could ever have found a man!"

I had to admit she was partially right. She had one of those restless retentive minds, an instinct for order and organization and an insatiable desire to influence everyone around her. She should have been a man and not a woman.

"You've never wanted a real man," I said. "You've always wanted someone you could push, and then you get tired of him as soon as you find he's pushable."

"Darling," she said, "you're the only man who ever tells me what he really thinks about me. You're wrong, of course, but it's heavenly. Do you think we'll see Eisenhower in England or France or somewhere?"

"Not unless he's a damn fool, but I wouldn't know," I said.

"Oh, well," she said. "Good night, darling."

Dawn was filtering through the windows of the plane when I awoke, and Dottie was fast asleep in the reclining seat beside me. Her eyes were closed, and her face, though tranquil, was

somehow still alert. She awoke almost as soon as I stirred and, unlike most people, she knew exactly where she was. She smiled at me as she rubbed her eyes.

"Darling, isn't it nice being with each other again?" she asked. "Again?" I repeated.

"I mean being on each other's minds, the way we used to be once," she said. "I haven't got anyone else on my mind but you."

Just then the door to the crew's compartment opened, and the mechanic caught my eye and beckoned. He wanted me to help awaken the passengers because we were beginning to let down from 9000 feet. We were landing in Iceland and we would start off to Scotland again in about two hours.

As we climbed out of the plane and started to a group of Nissen huts for breakfast, I had a glimpse of Dottie on the level surface of the runway, hanging back from the rest of the passengers with her mink coat draped carelessly over her shoulders, alone. She was standing straight with the breeze whipping at her hairdo but never pushing it out of place, staring aloofly at the stormy land. Yet she looked as much at home as though she were on Park Avenue waiting for a taxicab, and I was sure she would have done very well in Iceland, had she been obliged to remain there.

CHAPTER 5

The Army Couldn't Have Been Sweeter

SOME MONTHS before this junket with the VIPs I had been assigned the task of conducting three or four newspaper correspondents to the front in Normandy.

This was in the summer of 1944 during the build-up before the breakout near Saint-Lô, and it was here that I first met Major General Melville A. Good-

win. General Goodwin was commanding a division known as the Silver Leaf Armored, and the word was that he was somewhat of an authority on mechanized warfare. He only favored me with his personal attention because he wanted to make it very clear that I was to get the correspondents the hell out of his sector as soon as possible. Then it had occurred to him that I might not mind carrying back with me several personal letters he had written, and he took me with him to his dugout to get them. On our way a mortar shell landed near us, causing us to dive side by side into a ditch. He seemed to take the incident quite personally, I remember, acting as though it were a reflection on his own management that I should have rolled in mud; but finally he had said it would serve as a lesson to me not to come monkeying around in places where I did not belong.

I was shaken enough by the exploding shell to answer him somewhat disrespectfully. I told him, I remember, that it was not my idea of fun, being up there, and that I hoped I did not have to play around with him any more. Sometimes if you spoke frankly to those people, they enjoyed it, and he warmed up sufficiently to ask me what in hell I was doing in this war anyway. I told him I was sure I did not know, but whatever I was supposed to be doing wasn't useful. For some reason, this struck him as amusing, and he repeated it to his aide, who had come to brush him off. Then he said that I might as well have something to eat as long as I was there, and enough give-and-take had resulted so that he remembered me when I saw him again in Paris.

During the Battle of the Bulge in December, his division, the Silver Leaf Armored, had inflicted severe punishment on the crack German units that had endeavored to overrun it, but it had taken a bad pounding in the process, and in February it was being overhauled, and the General was in Paris on short leave. It was at just this time that I was there with that personally conducted tour, and General Goodwin himself was called in to help with the Very Important People.

The Battle of the Bulge was still a sensitive subject in some quarters, since it was feared that the American public had gained the impression that this German offensive may have come to our leaders as a nasty surprise. Somebody apparently decided that these Very Important People should be handed the real truth.

At any rate our group found itself in a room at one of the Paris headquarters buildings precisely at three o'clock one afternoon for a confidential lecture. There was a guard at the door to check credentials, and collapsible chairs were arranged as in a university classroom. There was a lecturer's platform, and there were specially prepared maps, covered by a drawstring curtain, with two officers to shift them. I had been ordered to make the first remarks.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I said, "we are now in what is known as 'a guarded room.' I am asked to emphasize to you that all you may see and hear during this hour is of a Confidential nature, just below the category of Secret. For this reason you are asked to take no notes. I believe that is all I was ordered to explain, isn't it, Colonel?"

"Yes, Major Skelton," the colonel said. "Thank you, Major Skelton."

I stepped off the platform, taking a place beside Dottie Peale, and the lieutenant colonel followed me on the platform.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "we are fortunate in having with us a divisional commander who took an active part in this battle and who has been kind enough to agree to outline it to you personally." He nodded to a sergeant in battle dress, who stood by a door next to the platform. "All right, Sergeant," the colonel said, "if the General is ready for us."

The sergeant opened the door with a snappy one-two movement and then stood at attention. As the door opened, a two-star general, who must have been waiting in the corridor, strode in calmly, and stepped solidly onto the platform.

It was General Goodwin, whom I recognized immediately. He was a man of about 50, of medium height, and his uniform was

smartly pressed, even though its elbows and his ribbons looked well-worn. His sandy-gray hair was freshly barbered in a crew cut. His eyebrows were heavy, and the lines around his mouth were as correct as the creases in his trousers. He had an aloof but agreeable look.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the lieutenant colonel said, "this is Major General Melville Goodwin, commanding the Silver Leaf Division, which saw action in the Battle of the Bulge."

The General looked thoughtfully at the map curtain flanked by the two lieutenants.

"Have you got a pointer here?" He spoke like a mechanic asking for a monkey wrench. The lieutenants and the lieutenant colonel scurried about the platform, searching with a galvanized sort of consternation, but somehow the pointer that always accompanied maps had disappeared.

The General raised his voice only slightly.

"There ought to be one around, Colonel," he said. "I always feel more at home when I have a stick in my hand." He smiled in a friendly way at the Very Important People.

"Well, go ahead and find one." His voice was a shade louder. "A ruler or a cane or something. And now while we're waiting, I might begin to tell you the whole secret of how to win a fight. This little ruckus" — General Goodwin strode toward the front of the platform and looked as though he were enjoying himself — "that we found ourselves in around Christmastime has all the principles of any other engagement, and the secret of winning a fight has been, I think, very well described by an old fellow in the Civil War."

The General paused and smiled again in a friendly way, and I knew what was coming. It would be the good old chestnut that invariably flashed before the military mind.

"The party's name was General Forrest, but maybe you know of him, because they tell me that you are all high-ranking writers here, though I didn't know we had so many lovely lady writers."

I saw the General smile approvingly at Dottie Peale. "This General Forrest said, the principle of winning a fight is, and I quote, *to git thar fustest with the mostest men*. Well, in this Christmas-time ruckus we didn't git thar fustest because the jerries were attacking, but we did end up with the mostest and we rubbed their noses."

The General rubbed his hands together. The sergeant was back with a pointer.

"Well, sons," he said to the lieutenants, "what are you waiting for? Pull back those curtains if they work and let's take a look at the map."

"Sid," Dottie Peale whispered, "he couldn't be sweeter."

General Goodwin's whole talk had what you might term a two-star competency, good and solid, without trespassing on the realms of three-star brilliance. He did not try, like so many of his kind, to project his personality or to exhibit the dynamics of leadership. He had learned somehow that this sort of thing was unnecessary. Without being especially impressed, I began to wonder what there might be behind this façade, where he had come from, and what he might be like.

In the middle of a sentence General Goodwin's talk came to a full stop. When I turned to look, I saw that a three-star general had joined us. He was an elderly-looking man with horn-rimmed glasses, and he stood watching like a proud headmaster.

"I was just explaining the position of the 101st Airborne, sir," General Goodwin said.

The visitor gestured to a sergeant to bring him a chair.

"I am sorry I wasn't here at the beginning," he said, "but now that I've interrupted I might make one slight contribution to this discussion. War is always war, ladies and gentlemen. The concept is always the same in spite of modern weapons, and that concept was ably expressed by an officer in the Civil War named Forrest. He said it was all a question of 'gittin' thar fustest with the mostest men.'"

It was an inspiration to observe General Goodwin's face. He seemed to have heard these remarks for the first time, and he gave them a subordinate's prompt approval.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Well, go ahead, Mel, and don't mind me," the Lieutenant General said, and he sat down.

"Yes, sir," General Goodwin answered. "Well, up here is the position of the 101st Airborne. . . ."

He had picked up his chain of thought again, exactly where he had dropped it, and the Battle of the Bulge went on to its triumphant conclusion.

In closing, General Goodwin said, "I don't want anyone here to think that there is anything definitive about these statements. A confusion called the fog of battle settles over any of these ruckuses. There's still a fog over the Battle of Gettysburg." He coughed apologetically. "Don't you agree with me, sir?"

It was very nicely done. He had tossed the ball over to his superior, who could carry it or toss it back. The Lieutenant General tossed it.

"That's quite correct," he said. "You people would be surprised at the study any battle involves but General Goodwin is carrying the ball for us. Go ahead, Mel."

"Well, sir," General Goodwin said, "maybe I'd better put the ball down now." He smiled, and his youth came back to him when he smiled. "Thank you, ladies and gentlemen."

I watched the group file out of the room. Before following, General Goodwin did the right thing. Smiling, he thanked the young officers for handling the maps and shook hands with the lieutenant colonel of Intelligence.

"I'm sorry about the pointer, sir," I heard the lieutenant colonel say.

"To hell with the pointer," General Goodwin said. "What is it, sergeant?"

"Would the General mind signing my short snorter, sir?" and

he unrolled the scotch-taped collection of paper money from various countries.

"Why, certainly," the General said. "I started one of those myself once, but I don't know where it's gone."

Cocktails were served in the offices downstairs. I had been told that morning that Military Government would take full charge of the party from 5:30 on, which meant that I could spend an evening in Paris by myself, but that time was still far off.

I was taking the precaution of ordering a double Scotch before the supply ran out, when the General spoke to me. He was right beside me with a double Scotch himself.

"Well, hello," he said. "Who let you in here?"

I shook hands with him and thought he would turn away and give his attention to someone else, but instead he went right on talking.

"Look, Major," he said, "I'm at loose ends here. How about having dinner with me tonight — if you haven't got anything else to do? Damn it, you don't have to. Never mind the rank."

"I don't," I said, "unless you want to pull it on me." Sometimes generals welcomed such a feeble joke. "Thanks for asking me, sir. I should enjoy having dinner."

"Don't sound off about its being a pleasure," he said. "I owe you a dinner. Those letters I gave you got home all right. Remember that mortar shell?" He laughed happily. "Let's have another drink and then introduce me to that pretty girl." He nodded toward Dottie Peale, who was standing arrogantly aloof in her tailored suit drinking a Martini. She was not as pretty as Helen, but she was the most attractive woman in the room.

Of course, Dottie had been watching us edge toward her although she smiled at us in quick, innocent surprise.

"Well," she said to me after I had introduced the General, "I thought you'd got lost, Sid, behind those maps or somewhere."

"Sid doesn't get lost," the General said. "Sid knows his way around," and he gave my shoulder a quick, affectionate shake. It

may have been that first warming glimpse of her that made the General call me Sid.

"Oh, I didn't know you knew Sid," Dottie said. ". . . Oh, thank you, sir." She had turned to a colonel who had arrived with another Martini. The tone she used when she called him "sir" was charming and ingenuous, but the colonel knew his protocol. When the General glanced at him, he left.

"That Martini looks pretty warm," the General said. "Here, let me tell him to get you a colder one."

"Oh, no, thanks," Dottie said. "It's very nice." Her voice had a serious, respectful note. "I thought your talk was intensely interesting, sir," she said. "I loved seeing someone as sure of himself as you were."

I still sometimes found myself believing Dottie when she was humbly serious.

"Well, thanks," General Goodwin said, "but I guess you haven't seen many soldiers, have you?"

"No," Dottie said, "not many."

"If you don't mind, sir," I said, "maybe I had better bring some of the other people up to meet you."

He was on duty, and he knew it.

"That's right," the General said, "but just stay here, will you, Mrs. Peale, and help me? I don't know these writing people."

As a matter of fact, I did not need to get them. All the Very Important People were already gathering around the General, so closely that Dottie was pushed to the edge of the circle.

"Oh, Sid," she said, "do you remember what I said about looking for a man?"

"He wears pants all right," I said.

"Look at him," Dottie said. "He must be bored to death, but he couldn't be sweeter. Sid, please look at him."

"I'm going to see too much of him," I told her. "He's asked me out to dinner."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Dottie said. "I think you're the most

selfish person sometimes. Sid, tell me, what are all his ribbons?"

Although everyone in the party had been given an illustrated folder explaining service ribbons and decorations, none of them seemed able to keep them straight. They only knew that every officer was a walking totem pole and that they could not read the signs.

"They aren't bad," I said, "considering he's a line officer and not in the Air Force. He's been wounded twice. He's got the *Croix de guerre* with palm, Distinguished Service Cross, Legion of Merit, and a lot of other things with stars and clusters. He hasn't done badly at all. They look like good, honest decorations."

"He's looking at his watch now," Dottie said. "Sid, can't I go to dinner with you?"

"No," I said, "you can't. You can't walk out on the program, Dottie, just because you have a sudden whim."

"Oh," she said, "so that's what I have."

"I'm putting it in a nice way," I began, and then we both stopped because General Goodwin was back with us.

"Well," the General said, "it looks as though the little party is breaking up."

Dottie spoke quickly before I had a chance to answer. "Won't you come along with us to the Ritz, sir?" she said. "Sid says that he's dining with you. I'm not going anywhere tonight, because I have a dreadful headache. I have a sitting room, and I'd love it if you two would keep me company while I take some aspirin. It's awfully lonely at the Ritz."

"Why, Mrs. Peale," the General began, "if you're not feeling well —"

Dottie laughed lightly and musically.

"It's only a diplomatic headache," she said.

The General considered the situation, and it only took him a second to put it all in order. "Perhaps I might make a suggestion," he said. "As long as you have a sitting room, why don't we all three have a quiet dinner there, Mrs. Peale?"

Dottie laughed. "I think it's a very good suggestion," she said, "as long as I didn't suggest it first," and then the General laughed as though Dottie had said something delightfully humorous.

"I've got a car outside," he said. "And now that we're all together, let's cut out this 'sir' business. We both know Sid, and my name's Mel. What's your name, Mrs. Peale?"

"It's Dorothy, sir," Dottie said, "but you can call me Dottie if you like."

CHAPTER 6

Sid, Here, Knows What I Mean . . .

IN PARIS that February, it was generally known that the armored division commanded by Major General Melville Goodwin had been a part of the group engaged in what was called "blunting von Rundstedt's spearhead" in the Battle of the Bulge. The Silver Leaf Armored had been rushed to a small village named Maule, where the situation was so critical that the division was ordered to attack before any suitable liaison could be established with the forces on its flanks. Through no fault of its own, the Silver Leaf had been cut off. It had even looked for a time as though it might be wiped out as a fighting unit, and I had heard it said that it only got off as well as it did because of its high morale and its commander's great skill with mechanized matériel. Whatever the facts, General Goodwin came out of the Battle of the Bulge very well.

For a few days correspondents had been curious as to who General Goodwin was. It seemed he had been a brigadier at Kasserine Pass and had done something or other in that unhappy affair that had been favorably mentioned. Someone recalled that

General Patton had spoken highly of him and had referred to him as Mel and had even called him a two-fisted slugger. He was a West Point graduate, but never on what was sometimes called the "first team." Yet first-team men had liked to have him in their groups.

When we had dinner that evening in Dottie's sitting room at the Ritz, I felt the genuine respect for Mel Goodwin that anyone in my position was bound to feel for someone who had been through what he had. I wanted just as much as Dottie to give him a good time. Dottie was always good at little dinners. I could do the ordering, she said, because I could speak French, and I could be bartender, too.

"Sid and I are almost like brother and sister," she said, "we've known each other so long."

While we had a drink she would go in the bedroom and put on something more comfortable than her old traveling suit, but we must not say anything interesting until she came out.

Dottie had no need to worry. The General and I said nothing interesting while she was in the bedroom. The General sat down heavily in a French armchair with rather dingy silk upholstery.

"By God," he said, "this is a good soft chair."

It was the first time I had seen him relaxed, but he was not wholly relaxed. His feet were placed so that he could spring up quickly if he had to, and the lines on his forehead and at the corners of his eyes and mouth had not softened.

"So you and Mrs. Peale are old friends, Sid?" he said.

He glanced at the closed door of the bedroom.

"Yes," I said, "we've known each other for quite a while."

I told about her marrying Henry Peale, and how she had taken over the publishing business.

"Why didn't you two kids get married?" he asked. "You sound as though you'd liked each other."

"She was looking for a man," I said. "What's that poem — about asking Abraham Lincoln to give us a man?"

He had not heard of it, though he liked some poetry, and he asked if I was married now, and then we started to go through that little ceremony of showing photographs of our wives and children, and I remember the General's saying that he wished he had one of Muriel when she was younger. The two boys were good boys, real Army brats. One of them was a lieutenant in the Pacific and the other was getting ready for the Point.

But I did not have a chance to see Muriel that evening, because, just as he was going to hand me the picture, Dottie came out of the bedroom wearing a black evening dress that looked as though it had never been in a suitcase.

"What are you doing with the wallets?" Dottie asked.

"Oh," I said, "just looking at our wives."

"Oh, dear," Dottie said, "am I intruding?"

"Muriel has never seen Paris," the General said. "I wish you could both meet Muriel."

"I hope I can meet her sometime when the war is over," Dottie said. "I'm glad I'm not a soldier's wife, especially a handsome soldier's wife."

"Does that mean me?" the General asked.

Dottie's nose wrinkled as she smiled at him. "Sid, darling, you're not being a good barkeep," she said. "Mix me my Martini."

The shadow of that unknown Muriel dissipated itself quite rapidly, as wives' shadows customarily did in the ETO, and Mel Goodwin was beginning to have a very good time. Dottie always possessed a brand of tact that could guide her in any situation. If she had learned nothing else, she was often fond of saying, she had learned how to make men comfortable.

"I can't tell you what this means to me," the General said. "In fact, I wouldn't want to tell you."

Maybe it was just as well that he did not try. He was a soldier there at the Ritz, the representative of a great tradition. Mel Goodwin was not handsome, and nothing he said had brilliance, but the level assurance of his glance, and the molding of his face,

so devoid of softness and flabbiness, made him a part of the ages. He was Ulysses having a little talk with Calypso, Lancelot chatting with Guinevere.

It was really a wonderful dinner. After the duck and the champagne, the General had begun to talk about himself.

He said that frankly he never felt at home when he was in a rear area. He was not a politician and he never had been. He knew his way around at the front. He could always understand what motivated troops. Now for example, outside of Maule, there was a situation with tanks. You had to keep them moving. You had to treat troops like kids sometimes, to keep them moving. He drove his jeep out ahead of the tanks just to get them going. It was not good judgment and he had no business out there, but it worked. You had to keep them moving.

Dottie sat in an armchair with her feet curled under her, listening.

"You mean you were out ahead of everything?" she asked.

"I shouldn't have mentioned it," the General said. "It was a foolish sort of thing to do."

"I'm awfully glad you did," Dottie said. "It makes me sure that everything I think about you is true."

Her voice made me realize, now that dinner was over, that neither Dottie nor the General needed me any more.

"You know," he said, "talking like this gets a lot of things clear in my own mind. That thing you said this afternoon about my being sure — that's an interesting thought. What is that poem about Ulysses? That one by Tennyson."

"Oh, I know the one you mean," Dottie said. "It's about the rowers and Ulysses going to sea again."

"That's it," the General said, "because he couldn't sit still . . . 'Push off, and sitting well in order smite the sounding furrows.'"

None of us spoke for a moment. I had not thought of General Goodwin as emotional until then. He sat staring in front of him, and then he looked at his watch.



"Don't," Dottie said, and she put her hand on his arm. "It isn't time to go."

"Well," the General said, "I've got my car waiting. Someone had better send it away."

"I'll tell your driver, sir," I said. "I've got to get some sleep."

"I'll see you tomorrow, Sid," the General said.

"I certainly hope so, sir," I said.

"Good night, dear," Dottie said, and she kissed me.

Neither Dottie nor the General spoke as I left the room, and their silence urged me to leave it quickly. It was a quarter to one in the

morning, I saw as I looked at my watch, and when I closed the door the echo of "the sounding furrows" lay there behind me.

The manner in which Mel Goodwin and Dottie Peale spent their spare time should certainly have been no concern of mine. In wartime one developed tolerance. What annoyed me, I think, was the naiveté he displayed. Granted he had fallen for Dottie like a ton of bricks, there was no reason why he should have fallen flat on his face in public. He should have realized that just as soon as I sent his driver home, everyone at the motor pool would know what had happened at the Ritz, and he might have refrained from taking Dottie conspicuously around in his car afterward — but I suppose she liked the two-star insignia.

At about noon the next day the General appeared at the bar of the Ritz, and seeing me there made him slightly self-conscious.

"Well, hello, Sid," he said. "We had a lot of fun last night, didn't we?"

"Yes, we certainly did," I said.

He looked at me uncertainly and then he smiled.

"Oh, hell," he said, "why not admit it?"

"Why not?" I said. "It's easier."

Then he looked at me in a hard way, because, after all, troops were troops.

"I admit it and I'm proud of it," he said, "but I don't want any of this to hurt anyone. I wouldn't want anything in any way to reflect on . . ."

He did not finish what he had to say because Dottie appeared at that moment.

"Oh," she said to the General, "I'm sorry I've kept you waiting, sir. Oh, Sid, here you are, too."

She was in her tailored suit again with a gold pin at her throat, and as usual she looked as though she had slept for hours.

"Sid, darling," she said, "Mel wants to go with us to see Napoleon's tomb. He's never seen it."

"Sit down, Dottie," the General said. "What will you drink?"

"Oh, Mel," Dottie said, "imagine your not knowing — a Martini, dear."

"Listen," I said. "Everybody else will be here in a minute. Why not put off visiting that tomb?"

"Oh, Sid," Dottie said, "don't be so sour just because you see I'm happy," and she scowled at me and then she watched the General, who had gone to the bar himself to order her Martini.

"Well, stop looking as though you'd swallowed a canary," I said.

She held my hand for a minute under the table. "Darling," she whispered, "do you know, I really think I love him."

"Well, that's swell," I said, "but don't love him in the bar" — I spoke very quickly because the General was coming back, carrying her Martini himself — "Just remember, Dot, he's a pretty simple guy."

"And I'm pretty sick of complicated guys," she said.

It was rather touching to see the proud, happy expression on the General's face as he carried the Martini. At any rate, it was none of my business, and we were going to Aachen on Wednesday. It would all be over on Wednesday.

THE MORNING I called at headquarters to discuss the final arrangements for the departure of the VIPs from Paris, I found that the officer in charge was one of Mel Goodwin's contemporaries, a harassed-looking man named Struthers. When we had finished with the details of our paper work, he asked me to close the door.

"Say, Skelton," Colonel Struthers said, "what's your reaction to all this about Mel Goodwin?"

"What about him, sir?" I asked.

He appeared relieved by my question, since it indicated that I had discretion, even though I had not been at the Point.

"Mel's had a lot on his mind," he said. "This is off the record, you understand. I'm a friend of General Goodwin's, and she's

not a bad-looking gal, not bad-looking at all. But I've never seen Mel step off like that. It's all contrary to his record."

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Well, maybe it's just as well she's moving out on Wednesday," the colonel said. "These things get around. There are always jealousies in the service, and there are some damn fools who don't like Mel."

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Well, come and see me," the colonel said, "any time you're in Paris. I've got a nice apartment with everything under control. I wish I had told Mel about it. Well, good-bye and good luck."

It was a relief to know that I was not being stuffy in worrying about Melville Goodwin's private life. Someone was always bound to notice when a general stuck his neck out. Someone was always looking for a flaw in a general's personal record.

CHAPTER 7

Always More Brass Where He Came From

TUESDAY was a very busy day what with checking orders and getting out mimeographed itineraries and briefing the VIPs on conditions in the forward areas. By four o'clock that afternoon, however, a short time was allowed me to do my own packing. I was in the middle of it when General Goodwin knocked on my door.

"Go right ahead," he said. "Don't mind me." And he sat on the edge of the bed.

"Dottie's packing up, too," he said. "She says I make her nervous watching. Dottie really knows how to pack, doesn't she?"

"Yes, she's certainly good at it," I said. "Has she got a headache?"

From the way the General hitched himself back on the bed you could see that he was used to making himself comfortable anywhere.

"Yes, another of those headaches," he said. "Sid, did anyone ever tell you you're a damn nice guy?"

"Well, thanks a lot," I told him.

"You know, once when I was finishing with Tank School at Benning," the General said, "I acquired a dog. He was just a mutt, but he kind of attached himself to me. I remember how he looked when I was packing up to leave. He knew sure as fate we would never see each other again. Well, that's the way I feel this afternoon. Damn it, I can't believe this is over."

The General stood up, paced across the room and back and sat down again.

"Maybe it's just as well," he said, "everything considered. You don't mind my talking to you frankly, do you? My God, I've got to talk to somebody."

"No, of course I don't mind," I said.

"Maybe I'm not used to this sort of thing," the General said. "It doesn't fall into any regular category with me. But I'm proud of the whole damn thing. You see what I mean?"

"Yes," I said. "It's a pretty good way to feel."

The General stood up again.

"Sid," he said, "I've been thinking something over. Dottie and I were talking about it. My aide got killed last month. If I asked for you, would you like the job?"

Dottie always liked to maneuver things, but it was also kind of the General to think of me.

"Yes, sir," I said, "I'd like it, but I don't think it would look well under the circumstances, do you?"

"No," he said, "I don't suppose it would, under the circumstances."

"Well, thanks just as much," I said.

"Sid," he said, "why didn't you ever marry Dottie?"

MELVILLE GOODWIN, USA

"I told you before," I said, "that I haven't got what it takes."

"Well, I'd have done it if I'd been you," he said.

"Maybe she wouldn't have married you, either," I said.

As I looked at him standing there in his worn, carefully pressed uniform, with its rows of ribbons and gold service stripes, I thought that he was safe as far as Dottie was concerned. After all, there were a good many major generals — but I had not expected him to follow my thoughts so closely.

"I know what you mean," he said. "I haven't got brass enough, have I? Well, I'll say good-bye now, Sid. You're a nice guy. Good luck."

"Good-bye and good luck, sir," I told him.

You were always meeting people and saying good-bye and good luck in the ETO. I was reasonably sure that I would never see General Melville A. Goodwin again.

When his hand was on the doorknob, he turned back to me for a moment and he had changed subtly and completely. He looked again like any other general officer, composed, assured, and removed from the ordinary strain of human relationships.

"So long, young feller. I'll see you in church."

He did not intend to put me in my place, but I believe he needed the reassurance of a sense of position. I felt in that last glimpse of him that many of the ordinary ties of friendship were denied him. He had attained the category of power that made friendship and sympathy a weakness. He was a piece on the chess-board again, remote, insulated and alone.

WHEN Helen said that night at Savin Hill that she could not tell what General Goodwin was like from anything I had told her, I suddenly realized that I no longer knew, myself. You had to see him in a war. He belonged with its sights and smells, with its obsequiousnesses and its brutalities.

"But you say you *liked* him," Helen said.

"You don't like anybody there," I told her, "in the way you

"Like people here." This was the truth. Liking in the ETO had an expendable sort of quality which you had to experience in order to comprehend.

When I finished, Helen did not speak for a long while, and finally I thought she had gone to sleep as I lay awake in the dark.

"Sid," Helen said, and I realized that I, too, was half-asleep, "when the General comes here, what will we do with him?"

I had no idea what you could do with anyone like Major General Melville Goodwin in a place like Savin Hill.

"Sid, I've been thinking," Helen told me. "You know, perhaps you could write something about General Goodwin."

The thought of doing such a thing had never seriously crossed my mind. I never dreamed that the preparation of the condensed biography of Melville Goodwin by a weekly news magazine would cause me to attempt to write about him. It was only later that I saw him as a quasi-Grecian figure moving along lines of almost inevitable tragedy. In spite of his lexicon of rules, his life was beyond his control, like the lives of all the rest of us. As he told me himself, he never knew what he had got himself in for when he had brushed that Russian Tommy gun away from his stomach in Berlin.

CHAPTER 8

It's Just the Old Man Taking Over

PHIL BENTLEY reached me on the telephone the next morning and told me that he had been assigned to write the piece about the General. I had met Phil in Boston when he was a reporter, and later I saw something of him in Washington. He had a quick, concise narrative style and a flair for lighting on those personality trivia that

weekly-magazine editors love in profiles. All the news crowd knew him and liked him.

"I'm glad you know this Goodwin, Sid," he said, "because I never heard of him. Are you sure you've got room for me?"

Then he wanted to know if there was room for the research girl who was coming out with him and who would take the notes. Her name was Miss Myra Fincholt.

"Expect us at about four," Phil said. "It's going to be quite a cavalcade."

WHEN I saw Mel Goodwin's expression that afternoon as he observed Savin Hill and was introduced to Helen, I began to feel pleased that the place was on a proper scale. I had the rank for the moment. I felt gracious and benign.

"It's been a long drive for you, I'm afraid," I said to Mrs. Goodwin.

She had the durable, well-traveled appearance that a general's wife should have, combined with the assurance that came of knowing her rank exactly. She wore gray gloves and a sensible black tailored coat on which a large corsage of orchids seemed elaborately out of place. She was about the General's age. Her hair, freshly waved, was frankly gray, with a beauty parlor's light bluish tinge that matched her eyes very nicely. You could see that she had been pretty once, in a rather petite manner, and her expression was agreeable and, I imagined, more interesting than it had been earlier. She had gained in character, and she had seen the world.

When I shook hands with her, I had the uncomfortable impression that she was mentally taking off my double-breasted coat and putting me back into uniform and that I was not receiving a high mark in the test.

"Mel's told me all about you. Major Skelton," she said. She might have been greeting me as a part of a committee, and I admired the brisk way she managed me.

"How-do-you-do, my dear?" Mrs. Goodwin said to Helen. "I hope you haven't felt that you had to make an effort about the General and me." Her duty was to put anxious people at their ease, and she was doing it well.

An entourage had gathered behind her — the General, and a stout, genial-looking officer who was undoubtedly Colonel Flax of Public Relations, and behind them at a respectful distance, Gilbert Frary, Phil Bentley, the research girl and a photographer.

Helen said, "Let's go in, and perhaps you and the General would like to go up to your room before tea, Mrs. Goodwin."

The ladies moved into the hall, but everyone else held back.

"Go ahead, all the rest of you," the General said. "I'm going to stay out here a minute and talk to Sid."

The General stood beside me, examining the house.

"This is quite an installation you have here," he said. "It's nice to see you, son. Damn it, all of a sudden having this thing blow up in my face. You should have seen what I've been through today, not to mention being given only about four hours to turn things over in Frankfurt." He took me by the arm, and we walked into the hall. "This all confuses the hell out of me," he went on. "Nobody said anything when I was cracking the line at Saint-Lô. Just because I was walking down a street in Berlin . . ." He paused and laughed shortly. "And now I'm under orders to do what these reporters want. I don't know how to answer these questions. Oh, there you are, Flax."

"Let me take your hat and coat, sir," Colonel Flax said.

The General would not have to think himself of such things as his overcoat and his garrison cap now that someone in uniform was around. He raised his arm quickly to look at his wrist watch. So did the colonel and so did I, instinctively, to be sure that we checked with the General's time.

"Sixteen hours thirty-five," the General said. "What's the program now, Flax?"

The General had not asked me what the program was, because

he had been running around with the colonel all day, but he picked himself up immediately and patted my shoulder. "Excuse me, Sid," he said. "It's just the old man trying to take over. Next time, slap my ears back, will you?"

In spite of his hours of travel and all the wear and tear of his day in Washington, he did not look his age. His short crew cut concealed the gray of his hair. His body was still tough and resilient, and he had a quick, hard smile.

"It's nice to see one of my old boys doing so well outside," he went on. "I didn't tell you, did I, Colonel, that Skelton was with me at Saint-Lô?"

"Why, no, sir," the colonel said.

There was no mention of the shortness of the time I had been with him in Normandy. I, myself, was beginning to believe that I had been with him quite a while. I was almost positive of it when he patted my shoulder again.

"I don't need to tell you, do I, Sid," he said, "what it means to me, your taking Muriel and me into your home here? It's like old times, being back with one of my old boys."

Colonel Flax cleared his throat in a tentative way, as though he hesitated to break up a reunion of comrades in arms.

"Perhaps the General would like a few minutes to himself," he said. "I'm afraid we've had the General jumping through a good many hoops today."

"Now that you mention it," the General said, "I might go upstairs and take a shower and put on a clean shirt. When does that man in the horn-rimmed glasses want to start asking me questions?"

"There isn't any hurry, sir," I said. "Don't worry. You'll get along all right with Phil Bentley."

"I'm not worried," the General said. "If I put my foot in my mouth, you boys are the ones who will have to pull it out."

When Colonel Flax and I were alone in the library, we were like doctors in consultation, fresh from the bedside of our patient.

"Now, my idea of presenting him," the colonel said briskly, "has been to show General Goodwin as a salty character with a lot of guts. That thing you said last night about his being a GI's general isn't bad at all. I was able to find one or two enlisted men who had served with him, and we had them talking together. He ribbed one of the boys about cleaning up in a crap game at Algiers."

"General Goodwin has a fine memory," I said. "He understands troops."

Colonel Flax looked at me questioningly and nodded.

"Do you know him well?"

"Does anybody know a major general well?"

"That's the problem, isn't it?" the colonel said. "You can't translate them into ordinary terms. I'm worried about this definitive cover story."

"Why are you worried?" I asked.

Colonel Flax leaned back in his chair and looked at me again very carefully.

"Well, frankly," he said, "he's so damn simple. Now in these cover stories, the news magazines always start digging and they want to get an angle. I don't want them to make a monkey out of Goodwin. Do you think it would do any good to give Bentley a briefing on the General's background?"

Public Relations officers, even when they were as good as Colonel Flax, constantly toyed with the idea that you could influence writers. The only thing to do was to give Phil Bentley everything there was, on and off the record, because, in any event, he would get it by himself. No doubt an investigative crew was out already, asking the General's friends and enemies what they thought of him.

Colonel Flax lowered his voice. "Did you ever hear about General Goodwin going overboard for an American girl in Paris, a writer or a publisher or someone?"

"Yes," I said. "As a matter of fact, I was there."

The colonel moved uneasily in his chair. "I don't like monkey-ing with anyone's private life," he said, "but this sort of thing, if it's used in a certain way . . ."

He left the sentence unfinished, but both of us knew how maliciously the material could be used.

"Phil's all right," I said. "I'll tell him the whole story off the record. Phil and I know each other pretty well."

THAT EVENING had its peculiar aspects. For one thing we were none of us entirely at home in our surroundings. I do not mean by this that the persons seated around our beautiful double-pedestal dining table did not know which fork to use. None of us had been reared in this environment — that was all. As we were preparing for the evening, Helen did not seem exactly nervous, but she did have an air of facing something.

"What's the matter? Do you feel shy?" I asked her.

"Of course I'm not shy," Helen said, "but that Mr. Bentley is so observant. He was walking around downstairs, looking at everything and whistling pointedly. Sid, I think you'd better put on a dinner coat."

"Why?" I asked. "No one else will."

"Because Mrs. Goodwin will expect it," she said, "with the General and everything."

Helen was right. Mrs. Goodwin expected to see me in a black tie. Her manner was approving when we all met downstairs in the living room. I only hoped that Phil Bentley would manage not to whistle.

"I didn't know you'd be dressing, Sid," he said.

"It's a simple reflex," I said, "my old respect for rank."

"Why do you respect him," he asked, "enough to put on a black tie? I never think of you as respecting anybody."

"Maybe you and I ought to respect a few more abstractions," I said, "such as courage and honor and duty."

"Do you think he respects those things?" Phil asked.

"He has to," I said, "and maybe you and I ought to."

"That's right," Phil said. "Maybe we ought to. Maybe I will later in the evening."

Phil took off his glasses, rubbed the lenses carefully and blinked at General Goodwin, who was standing in front of the living-room fireplace talking to Helen.

"He doesn't look too bad, does he?" Phil said. "But then, none of them do. That Public Relations colonel looks pretty nervous, doesn't he? Why should he be so jittery?"

"He wants you to do a good piece about him."

"I'll do a good piece about him. We have quite a lot of material on him already, haven't we, Myra?"

"Yes," Miss Fincholt said brightly. "The fun of this work is seeing what material comes in. You saw something of General Goodwin in Paris, didn't you, Mr. Skelton?"

"Yes," I said, "but I wouldn't press the Paris angle if I were you, Phil."

"I want to talk to you about it sometime while we're here, just to fill in background," Phil Bentley said.

Miss Fincholt smiled, the weary, studious smile of a raker in dust heaps. "I wonder whether Mrs. Goodwin knows anything about the General in Paris?" she asked. "Nobody seems to know if she does."

"Excuse me please, Miss Fincholt." It was Gilbert Frary speaking, and I saw that one of the broadcasting-company technicians was with him. "It is ten minutes to seven, Sid. Perhaps we had better go in. I have suggested to General Goodwin that he might sit at the desk beside you, for the photographs afterward."

The microphones were in place in the library. Art Hertz was standing near them ready to take the pages from my hand so they would not rustle. A technician stood near him with his watch, ready to give the signal, and the adjustments had already been made for my voice. The little show, I saw, impressed the General.

"We will be on the air in just one minute," Gilbert Frary said. "Will everyone please settle down."

There was a ridiculous, churchlike stillness in the library. The eyes of everyone were on me and General Goodwin. The show was on the air, and the voice of Stanley Rose came through from the studio speaking for the sponsor.

"In just a moment Mr. Sidney Skelton will be with you with his personal interpretation of the day's news, but before hearing Mr. Skelton I should like to ask you a single question: Do not your thoughts often turn to a fine full-bodied soup in this crisp autumn weather? . . ."

". . . and so, tomorrow morning, drop in at your nearest dealer's and look for that simple, friendly name on the can. You can't miss it. And now . . . Mr. Sidney Skelton."

It was Gilbert Frary who insisted on the "Mr." — just one more little grace note to give the program quality and integrity.

"Good evening, friends," I said.

The machine was moving in high gear. I could hear my own voice dealing with the revelations of a Congressional investigation, and I had to admit it sounded well. If I stammered or stopped, Savin Hill would go up in smoke, but I knew I would not stop. I had a measured assurance which never exhibited itself in everyday living. I was completely at home in this ridiculous show.

"And what about the situation in Berlin tonight?" I was saying. "Thanks to Major General Melville A. Goodwin, the big brass is saying tonight, the situation in that city is less tense. It has been quite a day for Mel, a name lots of the GIs know him by. Mel got off the plane this morning to be greeted by a barrage of cameras and of popular acclaim, but he ploughed right through it. As a matter of fact, Mel Goodwin is right beside me here, as I am speaking to you from my home in Connecticut, and — well, he's still the same old Mel I used to know when his division, the Silver Leaf Armored, was knifing its way through France and



rolling across Germany. . . . Well, good luck, Mel . . . And now, out in San Francisco this afternoon . . .”

Mel Goodwin’s spot was over. It had been of value. Somehow, an unseen presence by the microphone always helped to create dramatic effect.

“And now,” I was saying, “thanks for listening, and I’ll try to tell you how things look to me tomorrow.”

The program was off the air and I stood up.

“You see what I mean,” I heard Gilbert Frary saying to Mrs. Goodwin. “The intimate touch. And now, Sid, if Burt could take a few candid shots of you and General Goodman, just telling some little anecdote to each other by the microphone . . .”

“I’m sorry about this, sir,” I said.

“Cut out this ‘sir’ business,” Melville Goodwin said. “Why

didn't you tell me in Paris you could put on a show like that?"

"Because I never knew I could, in Paris," I told him.

"That's beautiful," I heard Gilbert Frary saying. "Don't mind the lights. Just keep talking to him naturally, General Goodman."

If Mel Goodwin was annoyed by being called Goodman, he did not show it.

It was a strange little dinner that followed, with all of us there for the ghoulish purpose of prying into the workings of General Melville Goodwin and all pretending that we were not.

"Everyone's been so nice to Mel today," Mrs. Goodwin said to me. "He doesn't like taking credit for anything that he doesn't think he deserves, but it's about time Mel received some recognition. He's done a great deal that nobody outside the service knows about."

She looked down the table at the General. She was a good Army wife, so good that it was hard to tell what she was like herself.

"I think the General looks well, don't you?" she said. "He still looks very much like the pictures taken when he graduated from the Point. I should know. You see, Mel and I were married the day after he graduated."

"Were you really?" I said. "The day afterward?"

"We were in high school together," she said. "Of course, I always knew he'd be a general someday."

"Why were you so sure?" I asked.

It was a careless question, but she answered it literally.

"Because I always wanted it. If you want something enough, you get it. I always wanted to marry Mel. I wanted two boys, and the children were boys. If you think of something long enough and hard enough, it comes true. At least, I've found it that way."

"And what do you want now?" I asked.

It was impertinent to ask her but I could think of years of wanting in Hawaii and Manila and Tientsin.

"I want him back," she said, "and now that our son Robert is back from the Pacific, I don't know that I want anything except to have them find something worth while for the General to do — something besides returning him to his command in Germany, though it's hard to leave a field command when a war is over. I don't mean that we like war, but, after all, that's what the service is made for."

She stopped and looked down the table again at the General.

"I don't suppose I should have said that," she said, "but I won't take it back."

Her expression as she watched her husband — a complete understanding that was both devoted and detached — made me see why they had married the day after Melville Goodwin had become a commissioned officer.

"You're not in the Regular Army," she said. "It only sounds ugly to you, but all we live for is a service record, even if it's always concealed in a file."

"We all have to live by some sort of record," I said.

"Yes, but not in black and white, the way we do," she answered. "Mel has what I like to think of as a straightforward record. I don't want anything to spoil it." She leaned toward me and lowered her voice. "I hope you'll help him with these newspaper people. Mel isn't the kind of officer who likes his name in print. Please don't let them twist things he says. Please don't let them hurt his record."

I wanted to tell her not to worry, but, instead, I began to worry myself, for fear she might be implying more than she had said. Dinner was almost over, and there was an abrupt silence at the far end of the table. Then I heard Colonel Flax speaking in a way that instantly caught my attention.

"Of course, by that," I heard the colonel saying, "the General doesn't mean he's sorry the war is over."

Then I knew that the General had been meeting the press all by himself at the far end of the table. Phil Bentley and the others

were staring at him in a bewildered manner, and the General's face was set in conventional lines.

"War is hell," the General said, "and war is a hell of a profession, but it's pretty tough on professionals when a war stops and we're not wanted any more. Now old Clausewitz would understand me and so would Julius Caesar. Look at the old Silver Leaf. That was a sweet division, a coördinated, battlewise division, and where is it now? Can you blame me if losing something like that hurts me artistically?"

Philip Bentley's glasses glittered in the candlelight, and I saw him glance meaningly toward Miss Fincholt.

"I see what you mean," Phil Bentley said. "I never heard it put quite that way before."

Helen pushed back her chair and stood up and I looked at Phil Bentley as anxiously as if I were Colonel Flax.

"To use an old military expression," I heard myself saying in my sincerest voice, "perhaps we'd better put the show on the road. We can go into the library if you want to, Phil."

I was relieved that Phil Bentley and the General both laughed.

I TOLD Phil Bentley to take over once we were in the library, and he did it very well. He asked the General to sit down near the fire and he asked us all to relax and be comfortable. Miss Fincholt sat at the desk with her notebooks.

"Now that we're all here," the General said, "I've said I'd be coöperative, but I don't like this sort of thing."

"It does look rather like being interrogated, doesn't it?" Phil Bentley said. "But you won't mind it after we get going, General. Any time you say anything you don't want on the record, let me know."

"All right," the General said, "let's get going."

"How about telling us where you were born and about your family?" Phil Bentley said. "Just tell us anything you want, as though you were trying to remember it all for yourself."

"All right," the General said. "I don't mind if you don't. I was born and raised in Hallowell, N. H., about ten miles away from the town of Nashua, in the Merrimack River Valley. The Hallowell hat factory is there. Maybe you have heard of Hallowell hats."

He waited expectantly, but no one had heard of them.

"It's a town of about 3000 population, a small mill town. There have always been Goodwins in Hallowell, I guess, but I haven't been around there much since I left for the Point."

His great-great-grandfather, Amos Goodwin, he went on, had been in the Revolutionary War, and there was always a flag by his slate headstone on Decoration Day. His grandfather on his mother's side had been in the Civil War. That was about all there was to say about his family, except that his father, Robert Goodwin, owned the drugstore, and when Melville Goodwin attended the Hallowell grammar school, there must have been ten other Goodwins there, including his two elder brothers and his sister, Celia.

I watched Miss Fincholt's hand moving smoothly across the pages of her notebook.

CHAPTER 9

It Must Have Been Those Decoration Day Parades

THERE must always be some scene when the curtain rises on anyone's career, and a September morning in about 1903, when the family were having breakfast, may be as good a medium as any other for introducing the life and times of Melville A. Goodwin. I found myself reconstructing his story pretty well from what he told us there in the library. It was

the period when Montgomery Ward offered a free trip down the Mississippi to the boys who could sell the most Montgomery Ward buggies in their communities. Melville's brother George Goodwin had seen the advertisement two weeks before, and he was endeavoring to induce his father to buy a buggy, but Mr. Goodwin was in a hurry.

"I've told you 'no,' George," Mr. Goodwin said, "and I don't want to have to tell you 'no' again. How do you know there's any trip down the Mississippi? Advertisements are only made to make a boy like you discontented."

"Celia, dear," Mrs. Goodwin said, "bring the coffeepot over to your father."

"Well, if you won't buy a buggy," George said, "can I have 50 cents?"

Mr. Goodwin put a little cream in his coffee and a spoonful of sugar before he answered.

"What do you want 50 cents for, George?"

"I want to send for an Indian snake's-eye ring," George said.

Mr. Goodwin sighed. "You ought to stop reading advertisements, George."

Melville ate his oatmeal in steady silence. His mother had packed his lunch box already with a jam sandwich, a hard-boiled egg and an orange. Soon it would be time to go to school.

"Mom," he said, "I don't feel very good this morning."

"Why, Mel," his mother said, "where do you feel sick?"

He tried to think of a good place to feel sick.

"Sort of everywhere," he said. He never was good at acting.

"Come here, Mel," his father said, "and stick out your tongue. I thought so. It's the old school complaint. I used to have it myself." He smiled. "And I know the cure for it. The cure is, go to school."

Ten minutes later Harry and he and Celia started. The sun was bright on Prospect Street.

"Harry," he asked, "can I walk with you?" If he went with

Harry past the Stickney house, he knew that he would reach school safely. The main danger always came from the Stickney house.

"What's the matter?" Harry asked. "Do you need a nurse?"

"No," Mel said.

"Then don't keep tagging after me," Harry said, and hurried on ahead.

"Go ahead, Mel," Celia said when they reached the Jacques house. "I'm going to call for Emily."

Mel Goodwin continued on his way alone. For one bright second he thought that Joe Stickney had started off ahead of him, but just as he began feeling that everything was all right, Joe ran down the front steps, and Mel knew that Joe had been waiting. Mel could shut his eyes and still see nine-year-old Joe Stickney, the merry, volatile Joe Stickney in his corduroy trousers and his red jersey. He was carrying a light switch with which he had been whipping at the elm leaves on the lawn.

"Hi, Baby Face," Joe said.

"Hi, Joe," Mel answered, politely and placatingly.

"You're a buffalo," Joe Stickney said, "and I'm Buffalo Bill. Run for your life."

The switch struck Mel Goodwin's calves, and he began to run obediently, trying to think it was a game, until they reached the schoolyard. He remembered that the older boys began to crowd around him as they often did before the school bell rang.

"Hi, fellas," Joe Stickney called. "He's a buffalo and I'm a Buffalo Bill. Let's see you go for me, buffalo."

Mel Goodwin had seen plenty of that sort of thing later — at the Point, for instance, on a more elaborate scale. It was a part of life, being able to take it, if you could not dish it out. He had discovered that if he did nothing, pretty soon they would grow tired, and he would have done nothing if Joe Stickney had not switched him across the face.

He was not conscious of the pain, but he felt cold and still, and

he was no longer conscious of sound or faces around him. He only saw Joe Stickney, taller than he was and older. Mel Goodwin had never struck anyone before. He heard Joe Stickney give a roar of pain and saw that he had landed square on Joe's nose and that blood was streaming down Joe's freckled face.

Mel must have been born with an instinct for fighting because he knew that the boy was off balance and that time was wasting. He knew enough to concentrate on Joe's thin nose. He pounded on it with short, sharp blows as they rolled on the hard ground of the schoolyard.

They were shouting to him to give it to Joe again, but he was cool enough to leave off when Joe began to cry.

When Harry said at supper that Mel had been in a fight at school, no one in the family took it seriously until Dr. Byles knocked on the door that evening and asked if Mr. Goodwin would open up the drugstore. The Stickney boy had a broken nose.

It was a childish little story, and yet later whenever he studied decisive battles in which everything had moved correctly, as at Austerlitz, Mel Goodwin used to think that his battle with Joe Stickney was also a model of its kind.

As TIME went on he learned a number of simple skills at Hallowell — how to handle a canoe, how to hitch the family horse, how to milk a cow and even how to plough. He also learned how to make a banana split and how to measure and to use the balance when he helped his father in back with the prescriptions. He could still wrap a package beautifully.

He wished he could see the people in Hallowell as an adult should, but unfortunately he was still an adolescent when he left. In memory, his mother would always be someone irrationally devoted to him. The last time he ever saw her, she had told him to be sure to button up his overcoat. His father would always be a mild, careworn man, whose problems were remote from his own.

"It always beats me," his father had said on one visit, "what made you want to be a soldier. I always sort of hoped you'd be a doctor and take over old Byles' practice. It must have been those confounded Decoration Day parades. I guess you're doing all right, Mel, but I wish that you had stayed home."

His father had been right. He never had recovered from a certain Decoration Day when the family had gone to Nashua to visit his mother's parents.

The whole family had been asked to spend the day, and they were leaving at nine in the morning in order to reach Nashua in time for the parade. Four veterans of the GAR were going to march in the parade, and everyone hung back to let them go on the streetcar first. They were old men but still able to get around without canes, and their black felt hats and blue uniforms gave them dignity. Then Sam Jacques, the motorman, began calling to everyone else to get aboard.

"You, Melly," he said, "you can get up front."

Melville found himself sitting next to Muriel Reece, but he did not consider it a privilege. Muriel was a dumpy, fat little girl, with hair the same yellow as his own.

"Melville," Mrs. Goodwin called, "you take good care of Muriel," and then she said to Mrs. Reece loud enough for Melville to hear, "Don't they make a cute little couple?"

"What are you chewing on in your mouth?" Muriel asked.

"It's a gumdrop," Melville said.

"Well, give me one," Muriel said.

It was not fair, having to give up his last gumdrop. As far as he could recall, he did not say another word to Muriel all the way to Nashua. If anyone had told him that Muriel Reece would be his best girl someday, he never would have believed it.

He hardly recognized his Grandfather Allen in his GAR uniform. The old man had kept his figure and he looked tall and straight. Furthermore he wore riding gauntlets which were not regulation, but they were a part of his old cavalry equipment.

"Well, well," he said. "Melville, ask your grandmother to give you a quarter of a dollar, and take your hat off when the flag goes by. There's a little something in the parlor cupboard if you're thirsty, Robert." He walked away down the street with his riding gauntlets stuck in his belt, blowing rank puffs from his Pittsburgh stogie.

"Oh, dear," Melville heard his mother whisper, "I'm afraid Father's started drinking."

If he had, Melville often thought, it had done him more good than harm that day in Nashua.

Perhaps it was not a good parade according to later standards, but it was the first time Melville had ever heard a military band playing "Marching through Georgia." It was the first time he had ever seen the colors on parade. The beat of the band had put life into the wavering marching columns, even into the GAR. The sight of that uneven marching company took Melville's breath away, and before he knew it he found himself on the street following the parade with other boys from Nashua. He would have followed the band anywhere and perhaps that band was playing for him still.

He was still "Marching through Georgia" when he sat on the steps of his grandfather's front porch later listening to the old men talk. Their coats were unbuttoned, their hats were off and their tongues were very loose. One of the men was talking about Malvern Hill and another was speaking of Fredericksburg, and his grandfather was saying that he had seen General Grant.

"Melville," his grandfather said, "maybe you'll go to a war sometime yourself — but maybe you'd better run inside now. . . . Wait a minute. Here's a 25-cent piece for you."

The next Saturday, when there was no school, he went alone to the Memorial Library. He walked timidly to the children's shelf, and there he encountered *Under Otis in the Philippines* by Edward Stratemeyer and the rest of the *Old Glory* series and also *Bob Raeburn at West Point*.

"Can I sit here and read one now?" he asked the librarian.

"Why, yes indeed," Miss Fallon said.

She did not know that she was talking to General Melville A. Goodwin or that she was directing his first steps on the road to war.

CHAPTER 10

Time to Call Him "Mel"

THE TIME was close to half past 11. We had sat listening for the last three hours, and when Melville Goodwin paused we all remained respectfully silent. He pushed himself out of his chair, squared his shoulders and glanced at his wrist watch.

"Of course," he said, "there was plenty of time to think back there in Hallowell. Do any of you like ballads?"

A sudden authority in his voice snapped us all to attention.

"Ballads?" Phil Bentley asked. "What ballads, General?"

Our minds were still snared by *Under Otis in the Philippines*, and it was an effort to follow the General's new train of thought.

"Macaulay," the General said, "*Lays of Ancient Rome*." He cleared his throat, and I glanced at Phil Bentley, who appeared bemused. He obviously could not believe that Mel Goodwin was about to give us a recitation, but this is exactly what was happening.

Then out spake brave Horatius
The Captain of the Gate:
"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.

And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his Gods?"

The General paused as though he expected that some one of us would make an intelligent comment, but no one spoke.

"Of course," he said, "whoever was handling the Rome defense perimeter shouldn't have depended on Janiculum, and it wasn't true that a thousand could well be stopped by three. Cavalry could have cleared the bridge, and Lars Porsena had cavalry. We had the same situation at Remagen — but there's real thought in that poem."

"I'm afraid I haven't read 'Horatius at the Bridge' for quite a while," Phil Bentley said.

Mel Goodwin smiled in a bright chilly way.

"It was just a stray thought," he said. "I've never had orders before to pour my ego all over the place, but you asked for it. I didn't."

Phil Bentley laughed nervously.

"It is getting late," he said. "We might close up now and start again tomorrow morning if you don't mind."

"Oh, I don't mind," Mel Goodwin said. "This is like a prisoner interrogation, isn't it? And you're pretty good at it, too, Mr. Bentley."

"I ought to be," Phil Bentley answered. "You see, it's the way I earn my living."

"Come on, Flax," the General said. "They're going to let us off now."

He and Flax could find their way upstairs themselves, he said. We would have breakfast at eight sharp, and he would be glad to start again directly after breakfast.

"Well, good night, young lady," he said to Miss Fincholt. "Good night, Sid." He stopped at the library door as though he

had forgotten something. "I wouldn't say I'm obliged to you for this," he said to Phil Bentley, "but just the same, it's quite an experience. Good night. I suppose you want to sit around and have a Goodwin session, don't you?"

Of course, it was exactly what we were going to do, but Melville Goodwin spoke again before any of us could answer.

"Well, go ahead. I don't blame you," he said. "I didn't know I'd remember so much. It's a funny thing — the past." His voice trailed off, and his gaze was not focused on anything. "Maybe there isn't really any past. Maybe it's all back there waiting for you to find it. . . . Well, good night."

THE DOOR closed on General Goodwin, and Phil Bentley took off his glasses and put them in his pocket.

"Sid," he said, "did you ever go through anything like that?"

"No," I said, "not exactly."

"You know," Phil Bentley said, "I've worked on actors and judges, politicians, industrialists and pugilists, but I've never seen anyone like Goodwin. I don't know whether he's bright or stupid. He's all there, but I don't know how to begin taking him apart."

He stood in the center of the room, looking lost without his glasses.

"Punching that boy in the nose and the parade, and the 'Old Glory Boys' and 'Horatius at the Bridge' — it's all too good, Sidney. If Fieratio Alger had wanted to write a boys' book about a military hero, that's exactly the sort of stuff he would have used. That's what I mean. It's too damn perfect to be true. Goodwin can't be the way he describes himself. No one can be a complete 'Old Glory Boy.' "

We stared at each other silently, each trying unsuccessfully to identify himself with Melville Goodwin.

"Look, Phil," I said, "maybe we were 'Old Glory Boys' once ourselves. The Alger books made a lot of sense to me once."

It was just possible, I was thinking, that Bentley and I had

both become too complicated to appreciate any longer the simplicity of a single driving purpose.

Before I started upstairs, I saw Farouche in his basket beneath the table in the hall. As soon as he saw me, he leaped up, seized his rubber ring and walked toward me wagging his plumed tail.

"Go back to bed," I told him, but instead of going he dropped the ring carelessly at my feet and only grabbed it when I stooped to pick it up. Farouche himself had a simple mind and in his own way was an "Old Glory Boy."

IT IS NOT wholly fair to say that Melville Goodwin intentionally made a command post out of Savin Hill. Actually he did his best to be a guest and not an occupying force. His difficulty was that he had not been obliged for years to adjust himself to any environment, because circumstances had compelled him to manufacture his own. If I felt rebuked at finding him waiting with Colonel Flax when I arrived downstairs at four minutes after eight, this only arose from old habit on my part.

"I should have told you to sit right down, sir," I said, "and to ring for breakfast."

He smiled in a gracious way that indicated that no apology was necessary. His face shone from assiduous shaving, and he did not need to say that he had slept well.

"Think nothing of it, Sid," he said. "Bentley and the girl aren't down yet either. I guess I ran that writer ragged last night."

"These newspaper people are always late in the morning," I said. "What would you like for breakfast, sir?"

"Bacon and eggs and coffee," the General said. "I'm just a country boy, and I like a country breakfast."

"It's just the same with me, Mr. Skelton," Colonel Flax said. "I was raised in Kansas."

The conversation moved in a well-worn groove. We were back in an officers' mess where one talked politely about nothing, while one thought of the day and the timetable.

"I wonder where that writer is," the General said, and he rose abruptly and placed his napkin on the table.

"Maybe I had better go and find out, sir," I said.

"Oh, no," the General answered, "don't disturb him, Sid. Let's you and I go for a walk. You wait for the writer, will you, Colonel? Tell him we'll be back in 20 minutes."

It was a fine bright morning with a cool faint haze over the fields around us.

"Come on," he said, "let's get moving." Then he added, "I'd like to get this interviewing over. Muriel says I ought to be down in Washington, finding out what's cooking." I fell into military step beside him.

"It looks as though you're all fixed here, son," he said. "I wish I knew what's going to happen to me. Being in the field has spoiled my taste for desk work. Well, I've had my chance, and now the whole show's over."

When we reached the stables Mel Goodwin turned on his heel, and struck out again at the same cadence. "I was just getting to be good," he said. "Son, I can handle a division the way a chauffeur drives a car, and I could do the same with a corps, and now I've got to forget it. I don't want to sit around waiting for another war."

The way he spoke aroused my sympathy but obviously it was impossible to maintain a continual state of war to give him happiness.

"A lot of other boys are growing up," I said. "You can still teach them, Mel."

I had used his first name without thinking of it, but then we were on a different basis from any we had been on since his arrival.

"Sid," he said, "there's something I've been meaning to ask you."

I knew immediately what it was. The question stood between us like a tangible shape.

"Has — er — Dottie Peale ever mentioned me when you've seen her?"

"Why, yes," I said, "*occasionally*."

"I suppose she's heard about this Berlin thing. I suppose she's in New York now," he said.

"Why, yes, Dottie's in New York," I answered.

We were both trying to speak casually. I wanted very much to tell him to forget Dottie Peale.

"Well," he said, "let's get back and get started. I really ought to be in Washington."

Phil Bentley was waiting in the library by the time we reached the house. "Are you ready for me, General?" he asked.

Mel Goodwin fixed Philip Bentley with a steely eye before replying. "Yes," he answered, "I've been ready and waiting for some time, Mr. Bentley."

"Well," Phil Bentley said, "then let's get going, General. Where were we?"

Physically we were just exactly where we had been the night before. The General had seated himself in an armchair in the half-relaxed, half-alert way that I remembered in Paris. If it had not been for Phil Bentley and Miss Fineholt, we might have been in any Army office talking over a military problem.

"General Goodwin was talking about the books he used to read," Miss Fineholt said, thumbing through her notes.

"Oh, yes," Phil Bentley said, "that's so," and he adjusted his horn-rimmed spectacles. "I wonder, General, if you read the personal memoirs of U. S. Grant back there in Hallowell."

"I read them when I was about 14," the General said. "The book was in the library." He passed his hand over his closely cropped hair. "When things weren't going right for me at the Point, I used to think that I was Grant."

"So you used to try to be like him?" Phil Bentley asked.

Melville A. Goodwin stared at his questioner.

"That's too easy, and don't put that in your article, son," he

said. "I'm not another Grant. He had small feet but his boots are too big for me, but — all right — every kid has to have a hero. All right, I used to think about him quite a lot when I was there in Hallowell."

CHAPTER 11

Clausewitz Would Have Concurred

HE LIKED Grant, Melville Goodwin said, because young Grant had been brought up like him, in a small provincial town, the child of plain parents. But he would never have told anyone that he wished to go to West Point, because everyone would have called him "Soldier" Goodwin or something of the sort. He never did tell anyone except Muriel Reece.

He was 14 years old when he told Muriel, and then he was in high school, but he was small for his age and he still wore knickerbockers. One cold afternoon in March, his father had asked him to help out in the drugstore, when their Congressman, Mr. Orrin Curtain, entered the store.

"Oh, good afternoon, Orrin," his father said. "When did you arrive?"

"On the four o'clock trolley, Robert," Mr. Curtain said in a fine ringing voice. "I arrived in Nashua yesterday from Washington and I cannot go back again without seeing my good friends in Hallowell. . . . And how is business, Robert?"

"Well," Mr. Goodwin said, "I'm still keeping busy."

"I was mentioning your store only the other day to Senator Lodge in Washington," Mr. Curtain said. "I met him buying a headache powder on F Street. I told him you had the best-run store in my district, Robert."

Melville was working hard polishing a glass showcase, but he felt a glow of pride that Mr. Curtain talked to his father in such a friendly way.

"And who's your young assistant, Robert?" Mr. Curtain said. "Wait, don't tell me. Why, this is young Melvin."

"You certainly do remember everything," Mr. Goodwin said. "That's pretty near to it, but his name is Melville, after his grandfather Allen."

"Melville," Mr. Curtain said, "of course. I apologize, young man. It's fine to see a boy who isn't loafing but helping his daddy out around the store."

Melville could feel their eyes on him.

"How old is Melville now?" Mr. Curtain asked. "About 14? If everything goes right, I might help out with Melville. I'm not promising but there might be an appointment to West Point."

It sounded exactly like one of the books he had read at the Memorial Library. He kept working on the showcase, but his head felt light; all of him felt light.

Then the telephone bell cut through everything like a knife.

"Hello," he heard his father saying, "yes, I can send Melville right up with it, Mrs. Reece."

"Nothing wrong at the Reeces', I hope," Mr. Curtain said.

"Sam Reece has gripe," Mr. Goodwin answered, and he deftly wrapped a small bottle and put an elastic around it. "Here, take this up to the Reeces', Melville, and then you'd better go home and do your studying."

"Good-bye, Melville," Mr. Curtain said. "I wish I were a boy again, with everything ahead of me."

Melville took the neatly wrapped package and went out in back for his overcoat and his rubbers. When he turned into Prospect Street, the slushy ground beneath him was completely devoid of its old texture of reality. His wagon was hitched to a star in the shape of Mr. Orrin Curtain. From the moment Mr. Curtain had spoken, he knew that he would go to West Point.

"Hello, Melville," Mrs. Reece said, when she opened the front door. "My, you got here quickly."

When she asked him to step inside and get warm by the parlor stove, he must have thanked her, but he was still in his daydream.

"Here's Melville, Muriel," Mrs. Reece said. "He's coming in to warm himself up for a minute. I'll just run upstairs now with the medicine."

"I'm only going to stay a minute," he said.

Muriel Reece was sitting at a table working at her algebra. Seeing her was no novelty. They both had desks in Miss Macy's room at the high school, and neither of them had ever taken the slightest interest in the other. Muriel, with her yellow hair in two long braids, looked exactly like any other girl in high school freshman year. She was wearing a brown, useful-looking dress, with a pleated skirt reaching halfway between ankle and knee. She had not put up her hair and she was not yet wearing a shirtwaist.

"Have you done your algebra yet?" Muriel said.

Melville had done nothing on his algebra.

"Why don't you sit down and do it now?" Muriel asked.

"All right," Melville said. "I may as well, now that I'm here." They were on simultaneous equations, and he remembered the example still.

"You haven't got it right," he said. Muriel had always been pretty dumb at algebra. He pulled a chair to the table beside her and picked up a pencil. "Now, look," he said, "you do it this way."

"You smell all over drugs," Muriel said.

"Well, I've been working down to the store," he told her.

"I don't mind," Muriel said. "It's a nice smell. What girl do you like best in school, Melville?"

"I don't know," Melville said. "I've never thought."

"It's just the same way with me about boys," Muriel said. "I don't know what boy I like best either."

He had never conversed for such a long while with a girl, and

it occurred to him that Muriel had changed without his having noticed. Her hair was the color of pulled molasses candy. She did not have as many freckles, and her mouth was no longer as big as it had been.

"You're awfully good at algebra," Muriel said.

"Oh," he said, "algebra is easy."

"When you grow up," she said, "I suppose you'll work in the drugstore."

"No, I won't," he said. "I'm going to West Point."

He had told her without thinking. She turned quickly in her chair to face him.

"Oh, go on," she said. "You're fooling."

"You wait and see," he said. "It's a secret. Don't tell anyone."

"Of course I won't tell anybody," Muriel said. "Oh, Mel, I think that's awfully nice. You look sort of like a soldier."

It wasn't a memorable speech, but somehow nothing that anyone had ever said to him had ever sounded quite that way.

THE NEXT morning, just by accident, Melville happened to be starting for school just as Muriel walked by his house, and he walked to school with her, and when school was over, they started home together at the same time. From that time on, Muriel had always kept a cool eye on his behavior. When Eunice Rogers, who was the prettiest girl in the class, passed him a note in the hall which read, "Somebody loves you," Muriel asked him on the way home from school what the note had said, and he showed it to her. Muriel made a disgusted face, though it was not his fault that Eunice had given it to him. He had never paid any attention to Eunice Rogers, though her hair was up and she wore shirtwaists with little butterflies and things embroidered on them. Eunice might be good-looking, Muriel said, but the truth was, and Melville might as well know it, Eunice Rogers was getting boy-crazy. Nothing was sillier than writing flirt notes, and Muriel hoped that Melville had not answered the note.

If Melville ever felt as silly as that, if Melville ever felt that he had to hold somebody's hand, he did not have to make himself laughed at by sending flirt notes to Eunice Rogers. If Melville ever felt silly that way . . . Muriel stopped talking and stared grimly in front of her while they passed the Memorial Library.

"If you have to be silly," Muriel said, "you can hold hands with me, but if you try to kiss me, I'll slap you."

"I didn't say I wanted to kiss you," Melville said.

"All right," Muriel said, "then don't be silly."

IF HE had not delivered Dr. Byles' standard grippe prescription at the Reeces', he might have answered Eunice Rogers' note, and if he had answered the note, he might have been the one who had married Eunice, instead of his brother Harry, who began to grow silly about Eunice toward the middle of summer.

His brother Harry, as soon as school was over, went to work in Mason's garage at Nashua, and shortly afterward Harry induced their father to purchase a secondhand Model T Ford, the first car the family ever owned. Melville would never forget his first sight of the brass radiator and the brass carbide lamps as Harry drove it into the yard. He learned to drive it right away, and he was fascinated by the mechanism and by its power. When he was in that Ford with the windshield open, feeling the wind on his face, he almost forgot West Point.

In time all his ambitions might have been changed by that Ford, if it had not happened that during the summer a regiment of New Hampshire militia camped on the old fairgrounds at Blair, five miles away from Hallowell. He went to the fairgrounds at Blair, driving the Model T, and for the first time he saw troops. It was the first time, too, that he and Muriel Reece had been anywhere alone together, because he had asked Muriel to drive with him to Blair.

It was an August afternoon, so still and hot that the leaves on the elms hung motionless and exhausted. He backed the Ford

out of the barn, turned it correctly into the yard, and went in low out to the street. The pulsing, shaking engine felt immensely powerful.

It was not due to any plan that Muriel happened to be on the front porch of the Reeces' house.

"Hey, Muriel," he called, "would you like to take a ride?"

He waited with the engine running while Muriel walked slowly toward the car.

"Oh, Melville," she said, "I'd like to, but I don't know whether I ought to and I can't ask Mother because Mother's gone to Nashua. Are you going a long way?"

"Oh, no," he said, "only down to Blair" — but it seemed like a thousand miles to Blair.

"Do you think it's safe?" she asked.

"Safe?" he answered. "Of course it's safe."

"Well," she said, "it's silly, but I'd like to go."

Any good leader had to develop a sense of premonition. When Muriel climbed up beside him to the worn upholstery of that Ford runabout, Melville Goodwin had a reasonable certainty that if he and Muriel went to Blair they would go to other places, and an equal certainty that if he did not go to Blair, his life would follow quite a different pattern.

"Why are we waiting?" Muriel asked. "Why don't you make the thing go?"

"All right," he said, and he pressed the little pedal by the steering post and the car began to move down Prospect Street.

"My goodness," Muriel said in a few minutes, "we're out of Hallowell already."

They were only traveling at 20 miles an hour, but the Ford was eating up the distance. They were a mile out of Hallowell, beyond the unpainted buildings of the Sawyer farm already, and over the bridge that spanned the Sawyer Brook.

A blue farm wagon drawn by two dapple grays was approaching him, and he kept well to the right.

"Melville," she asked, "do you like poetry?"

"Yes," he said, "some kinds, but not love poetry."

"I know a poem called 'The Highwayman,' by Alfred Noyes," Muriel said. "Shall I say it?"

"Yes," Melville answered, "go ahead and say it."

"All right," Muriel said. "I wouldn't say it to just anyone because some people would say that it sounded silly . . ." and she started it correctly, beginning with the title in the way one had been taught to recite poetry at Hallowell:

The Highwayman
by Alfred Noyes

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor . . .

The purple moor seemed to wrap itself around them both until he became Mr. Noyes' highwayman and she was Bess, the landlord's black-eyed daughter. When her voice stopped, Melville came to himself almost with a jolt.

"It's a kind of a silly poem," she said, "but it sounds nice, doesn't it?"

"It's all right," he answered, "except that with all those soldiers after him, he would have waited until there wasn't any moonlight, if he'd had any sense, and if the road was white, he'd have kept off the road."

His thinking was absolutely sound, and he was pleased that he could criticize the poem.

"I don't see why you have to spoil it all," she said. "It would be braver to come by moonlight."

There was no time to argue with her. While she was speaking, they had come around a bend, and he could see the buildings of the fairgrounds.



"Gosh," he said, and he hardly recognized his own voice, "the place is full of soldiers." He could see that columns of infantry and khaki-covered wagons were filling up the fairgrounds, and that tents were already being pitched in rows.

Melville stopped the Ford on the grass by the side of the road. He could still remember the heat of the waning sun on his bare head, the rumble of the wagons, the sweating, weary faces and the shuffling medley of tired footsteps.

It was a hot day and the troops were soft as butter. They all were straggling, though there had been a pathetic effort to call companies to attention. The regimental band, if you cared to call it a band, was endeavoring to play them into camp, struggling painfully with "The Stars and Stripes Forever."

Melville stood utterly bemused by the moving column, fascinated by the Springfields, by the officers' service revolvers, by the felt hats and blue braids, by the packs and the blankets and by the heavy rumbling wagons. He was so lost in the beauty of all he saw that he had forgotten Muriel until she tugged at his sleeve.

"Oh, Mel," she said, "aren't they lovely?"

Melville glanced tolerantly at Muriel. He had read *A Plebe at West Point* and its sequels and all the historical fictions he could find in the library and was working on *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*. He was an authority.

"They're all right," he said, "but they aren't regulars, and some of them are out of step. They haven't even any pickets out." He spoke wearily and condescendingly.

"What are they going to do now?" she asked.

"They're going to pitch their tents for the night," he said. "I guess it will be all right to watch them."

Slowly, painfully, with groans and oaths, the company streets were taking shape and fires were being lighted near the cook tents. No one alive, Melville thought, could have helped being stirred by that smell of wood smoke and of cooking, by the scurrying of the water and kitchen details and the guard. Both he and Muriel must have forgotten about the time, until the bugles blew assembly. Muriel had stayed beside him, quiet and uncomplaining, but now her voice was plaintive.

"It's getting awfully late," she said. "I don't know what Mother's going to say."

"Oh," he said, "in the Ford we can get back in no time."

Nevertheless he knew they had stayed too long. It was six o'clock. They were almost running when they reached the Hallo-

well road, but when they reached it, he could see no sign of the car. His father's Ford was gone.

At one time or another, Melville Goodwin had been exposed to *all the components of surprise and disaster*, yet *his personal reactions* had not changed greatly since that moment at Blair when he stared at the track left by the Ford's wheels. There would always be the same grip at his throat, the same hideous, hollow tension in his stomach that he felt that day. The main remedy was always quick, decisive action. Muriel's presence beside him exerted the same stimulus that the presence of troops did later.

"Melville," he heard her wail, "what are we going to do?"

While Muriel was still speaking, he began tracing the tire marks. He only had to follow them for a few yards to discover that the Ford had been driven into the fairgrounds.

"It's all right," he said. "It's around here somewhere."

Then he grabbed her by the hand, not to console her, but because he was in a hurry. The car, he was thinking, would not be on the company streets or near the officers' tents, but rather in the neighborhood of the wagons. It was the first estimate he had ever made of a serious situation, and it had been correct. He saw the Ford down by the wagon park. Four militia men were examining it, making humorous remarks. One private, he remembered, was drinking from a whisky bottle.

"That's my automobile," Melville said.

He was ashamed that his voice quavered in his first experience with troops.

"Say," one of the men said, "look at the two little sweethearts."

Melville found himself blushing. He had forgotten that he was holding Muriel's hand, and he dropped it like a hot potato. He could still remember the red hair of the man who had spoken and his one gold tooth.

"That's my automobile," Melville said again.

"Why, you little snot-nose," the redheaded private said, "how do I know it's your automobile?"

"Because I told you so," Melville said, and he was glad that his voice was firmer.

"So you told me so, did you?" the redheaded soldier said. "And what are you going to do about it?"

It was a sensible question. Melville swallowed and he felt his heart beating in his throat.

"I'm going to drive it home," he said.

"Now listen, bub," the redheaded soldier said, "you get the hell out of here before I slap your ears back."

"Oh, leave him alone, Jake," someone said, "he's only a kid."

"You heard me," the redhead said, waving an open palm at him, "get out of here."

Melville knew it would be better to have his teeth knocked out than walk away. At just that moment, Muriel tugged his arm.

"Here, Mel," she whispered to him, "take this."

Muriel was holding out a bayonet to him. She must have found it in the heap of equipment near the Ford. He had never held a bayonet before, but at that moment it seemed completely natural to be holding it.

"Keep away from me," Melville said.

"Why, you murdering little rat!" the redhead shouted. "You ought to go to jail."

The others around the car laughed, but it was not all a joke.

Melville backed away carefully and climbed behind the wheel of the Ford, put the bayonet on the seat beside him and accelerated the motor. He told Muriel to get in beside him. That was all there was to it. No one shouted after them as he drove the car toward the fairgrounds gates. The only sound that he could remember was Muriel's convulsive sobbing.

"Don't cry, Muriel," he said. "There's nothing to cry about," and he threw the bayonet out of the car.

He was never embarrassed after that when anyone in Hallowell said that Muriel Reece was his best girl.

Most of Melville Goodwin's subsequent life having been made

up of fighting or considering the problems of fighting, it was his habit to review the actions in which he had participated, and the action at Blair fell into a classic pattern. Essentially, it had been fought by Muriel Reece, who had brought the weight of reinforcement to bear at the critical point.

CHAPTER 12

*"If You Can Dream and Not Make Dreams
Your Master . . ."*

MELVILLE GOODWIN'S words came to a standstill. His attempts to describe his life and his family had been prolix and humorless; yet when he stopped speaking, I could feel not only the stark outlines of Hallowell but something of its depths and lights and shades. His personality, or perhaps his utter lack of narrative skill, made Hallowell and young Mel Goodwin much more real to me than anything at Savin Hill. He was standing on firmer ground than all the rest of us.

Perhaps the others were thinking as I was — that compared to Melville Goodwin we were febrile and superficial, driven easily by light motivations and ambitions. Phil Bentley wore the rapt expression of someone who loves music listening to the last notes of a symphony. Miss Fincholt sat gazing at the General in a way that made me wonder for a second whether she could be thinking of herself as another Muriel Reece.

We were still right there with Melville Goodwin when he went on.

"Well, I guess it was that summer that I went to a Sunday School picnic. I remember it because it was the last one of those functions I ever attended. There was a grove and a lake halfway to Nashua. We went there in the trolley car —"

A knock on the library door cut the General's sentence short.

"Pardon my interrupting," Oscar said, "but Mr. Frary wanted to know if he could speak to Mr. Skelton for a few minutes. He's upstairs in his room."

I had completely forgotten that Gilbert was still with us.

"Go ahead, Sid," the General said, "I can get along."

HELEN was in the upstairs hall. "Come in here for a minute," she said, "and tell me what we're going to do for the rest of the day. Gilbert is in his room using the telephone, so I can't use it, and Mrs. Goodwin is in the living room crocheting a washcloth."

"Is she really crocheting a washcloth?" I asked.

"She's making a whole set of them," Helen said. "She finished one last night after dinner, and now she's on another. How far is the General in his life?"

"When I left him he was just 15," I said. "He was taking Muriel to a Sunday School picnic."

"Do you mean," she asked, "that after all this he's only 15?"

I could think of the General unrolling himself like a film against a fixed time limit.

"Don't worry," I said, "at the rate he's going, he'll be much older by evening. Who knows—he may be 25 or 30."

We looked at each other for a moment and then we both began to laugh.

"Darling," Helen said, "we do have a good time, don't we?"

"Yes," I said, "always, Mrs. Winlock."

THE JUMP from the mind of Melville Goodwin to the mind of Gilbert Frary was like moving from a temperate to a tropic zone, and it was no help, as I was preparing for the meeting, to encounter Farouche bounding toward me in the upstairs hallway. A bright new bow gathered the fur together on the top of his cranium. His dark eyes were limpid and thoughtful, and when he saw I was not interested in his ring, he accepted my reaction

in a gentlemanly way and stood quietly beside me when I knocked on Gilbert's door.

"Come in," he called. "Oh, excuse me, Sidney," he said and he rose hastily from an easy chair. "I didn't know it was you. That makes a pretty entrance, you and the poodle. It makes me want to pinch myself to be sure that I'm awake."

"Did you have a good night, Gilbert?" I said.

"A very restful night, as always in your home, Sidney," he answered. "I wish I might stay longer. There is nothing I would like better than to sit here all day dreaming dreams as I have this morning. Have we time to sit down for a moment?"

I pulled a chintz chair closer to his. "What have you been dreaming about, Gilbert?"

Gilbert sighed and placed the tips of his long fingers together. "Frankly, I was dreaming somewhat about the program and a stray remark that George Burtheimer passed the other day, not adult, just a stray remark. George is whimsical sometimes."

Gilbert shook his head and smiled at his memory of the whimsey, but I felt a slight uneasiness.

"Go ahead, Gilbert," I said. "What is it about the program?"

I felt the gentle impact of something being dropped on the toe of my shoe. It was Farouche's rubber ring, and I gave the ring a kick and Farouche bounded after it, and Gilbert laughed.

He said, "You might think it was a rat or something. I wish I might have a dog, but they hardly fit at the St. Regis."

"Go ahead," I said. "What's the matter with the program?"

"Now, Sidney," Gilbert said, "you and I know there's nothing the matter with the program but you know a sponsor's line of thought, and the little restivenesses they sometimes have when they sign the checks for a million-dollar appropriation."

"And if they have, so what?" I said.

"It's just a little matter," Gilbert said, "but I have been dreaming over it for several days, and this morning at nine I checked myself by turning on 'Alan Featherbee and the News,' because

George has been mentioning him a little wistfully lately. There may be something in the voice that has escaped me up to now, not that it compares with yours for an instant, Sidney, but frankly I was impressed by Alan."

I knew that Gilbert would not have mentioned Featherbee without a purpose. I was sure of it when I noticed Gilbert's studious look. He was mentally comparing me with Featherbee, weighing us in his mind as competing pieces of property.

"Well . . ." I said, "what the hell about him?"

"Absolutely nothing about him," Gilbert answered. "He has no color or stature. Yet he does do one thing which is conceivably interesting, and that was all that George was speaking about."

"What does he do," I asked, "birdcalls?"

"Sidney," Gilbert said, "please understand me and please forgive me, without showing pique or employing persiflage."

"Damn it," I said, "let's get on with the situation, Gilbert!"

Gilbert made an eloquent soothing gesture with both hands. "Well," he said, and his words were more measured, "there is frankly a little feeling in the sponsor's office that you should speak the commercials yourself, weaving them in with the news, as Alan Featherbee does."

"My God," I began — "wait a minute, Gilbert!" — but Gilbert interrupted me, speaking very quickly.

"Now, Sidney," Gilbert said, "it shocked my integrity just as it does yours when I first faced it. But as you consider the suggestion, Sidney, in an unbiased way, it is not so bad, basically. I've made a few notes . . . oh, here they are." Gilbert picked up a piece of paper from the breakfast tray. "These notes are merely a little dream. But just suppose you were to open this way. . . ."

Gilbert cleared his throat and began to read: "Good evening, everybody. The news is very important and very critical tonight, but first, before I give it to you, let me tell you a little personal adventure of mine that was news to me. Sitting in my Connecticut home this evening, I was faced with a plate of onion soup. Its

very aroma reminded me of the restaurant near the Rue de la Paix where I love to dine when I am gathering news in Paris. Its taste conjured up the vision of old Pierre, the chef, whom I had congratulated on his onion soup when I was last in Paris at the time of the breakup of the cabinet. Its stock had that same full-bodied, invigorating authority . . .”

Gilbert took off his glasses and put them back in his pocket and waved the sheet of paper in an expansive fanlike motion.

“That’s my dream, Sidney,” he said, “a commercial with news action in it. It needs hours of careful thought, but you understand it, don’t you?”

I could understand it and I sat for a moment without speaking.

I was considering roughly what I had lived for and what everything had meant and when it was time to stop.

“How serious are you about that, Gilbert?” I asked.

“Not serious at all. Merely advancing the idea.”

“Well,” I said, “why don’t you get Alan Featherbee to do it?”

“Now, Sid,” Gilbert said, “don’t take it that way. It was merely a suggestion—but there is Clause 28 in the contract.”

“What is Clause 28?” I asked.

“George considers it an escape clause,” Gilbert said, “though frankly I consider this legally debatable.”

“Well,” I said, “then why do you bring it up, Gilbert?”

Savin Hill and my present situation had never seemed so ephemeral. I could imagine the house and everything being carted away in boxcars as I sat there contemplating Gilbert Frary.

“Sidney,” he said, “I have brought up absolutely nothing.”

There had been something and now there was nothing.

“Gilbert,” I said, “I don’t understand all this.”

“Sidney,” he said, “I should have known that this was a suggestion that could have never stood before integrity. Forgive me and let’s forget it, Sidney.”

“All right,” I said, “let’s forget it, Gilbert.”

“The cheapness of it . . .” Gilbert said. “I feel indignant about

it myself. When I get to the office, I shall call up George and tell him so personally. I'm completely with you, Sidney."

"Well, that's fine," I said.

"When you and I are together," Gilbert said, "I have no sense of time. It's actually a quarter before 11. I must be leaving, Sidney, and please let me steal downstairs—without fanfare—and give my love and thanks to Helen. And, Sidney—"

"Yes?" I said.

He held out his hand and we shook hands. "Don't worry about Clause 28. There's absolutely nothing in it. George only mentioned it playfully."

I felt weary when I stood outside the house watching the Cadillac leave with Gilbert for the city, though our talk had been no more disturbing than other talks with Gilbert. I was a valuable piece of property and a contretemps like this was all a part of the climate in which I lived.

When he was gone I remembered Melville A. Goodwin in the library, but returning to him seemed to involve a considerable effort. I wandered into the living room. I had forgotten that Mrs. Goodwin might be there, and I had already walked past her when I heard her voice behind me.

"I hope the General isn't saying things he shouldn't." She was sitting on the corner of the long sofa crocheting a washcloth, just as Helen had said.

"Oh, no," I said, "everything's going very well," and then I sat beside her on the sofa. "He was telling' us how you handed him a bayonet, when the militia took his father's Ford."

"Oh," she said, "that was a silly thing for him to tell. Mel always had a stubborn streak, and I was afraid the man was going to strike him. It's queer he should think of that afternoon at Blair. Of course, we never told about the trouble when we got home. That was Mel's and my secret." She looked at me and smiled. "I was glad to have some sort of secret with him."

CHAPTER 13

Don't Say You Didn't Mean It, Mel

IT WAS undoubtedly a washcloth she was crocheting—white with a green border—and she was doing the border now with quick, even plunges of her needle. A slight relaxation about the corners of her firm, small mouth showed that she enjoyed what she was thinking. She was like someone opening a box of old letters.

"The General was speaking of a Sunday School picnic," I said. "You all rode somewhere on the trolley."

Mrs. Goodwin glanced up, but she did not forget the washcloth. "Are you being polite or are you interested?" she asked.

"If you really want to know," I told her, "I started by being polite, but I like putting things together. It's a habit, I suppose."

She nodded and I felt like a young officer paying a formal call upon the commanding officer's wife. "I suppose you think the General's a type," she said.

"Why, yes, of course I do," I answered.

"And I suppose you think I'm a type."

"Why, yes," I said, "the idea occurred to me."

She smiled. "I'm glad," she said, "because I've always tried to be. So few people outside the service ever try to understand the service. The General calls you Sid. Do you mind if I do?"

"Why, no," I said. "I'd like to have you."

"If you call him Mel," she said, "I don't know why you shouldn't call me Muriel. How long were you with the General in Paris?"

I was almost sure that Dottie Peale was coming next. Mrs. Melville Goodwin was crocheting me like her washcloth.

"I only saw him off and on for a day or two," I said.

I waited for her to twist me further into the design, but the design changed. "I know what you mean by liking to put things together," she said. "I was in Washington before Normandy, sharing a home with a dear friend of mine, Enid Joyce, the wife of Colonel Joyce. Poor Bud Joyce had a bad back and he never had his chance. He was in G-2 in the Pentagon, wearing a brace, and Enid and I would spend off moments in Alexandria working over a 500-piece picture puzzle on the bridge table. After D day, sometimes I used to creep downstairs at two in the morning and turn on the light and look for pieces."

She paused and smiled at me. "If Mel and I were a puzzle all cut up by a jigsaw," she went on, "I suppose that Sunday School picnic out at Rodney's Grove would be a corner piece."

Melville had worn a suit of blue serge handed down from his brother, Harry. The suit was too heavy for August, but if he removed the coat, everyone would see how his shirt, also inherited from Harry, kept billowing around the middle, and the way the neckband was folded here and there to accommodate the celluloid collar that was too small for it. Melville did not wear a hat because he had no summer hat, but he looked very neat and nice, Muriel thought, as they climbed onto the open trolley up front with the rest of the Senior Bible Class and Mr. Atherton, the Sunday School superintendent.

Melville offered her a stick of Beeman's gum. Although Melville said that he was not hot at all with his coat on, there were beads of perspiration on his forehead, and when she found that he had forgotten to bring a handkerchief, she offered to lend him hers. It was nice to have Melville sit next to her—but there was no chance to have a private conversation.

It may have been that Mr. Atherton, from previous experience, was against private conversations among the older group. At any rate, when they reached the Grove, Mr. Atherton thought of a long succession of games and songs in which everyone was

obliged to join until almost time for departure. Then Mr. Atherton had to see that the younger children were accounted for, and at this point Melville suddenly suggested to her that they take a walk around the pond.

The walk hardly seemed worth while, once they had started, because neither of them had anything to say. She did tell him that she had read *A Plebe at West Point*, and he had answered that it was just a kid's book. After that they said nothing till they were a quarter of the way around the pond. They stopped finally under a maple tree near the water's edge, and there was a little patch of lily pads and one white pond lily on the water a few feet offshore. She remembered the silvery look of the sunlight on the lily pads.

"Muriel," he said.

"Yes," she said, "what is it, Melville?"

"Oh, nothing, I guess," he said.

Then before she knew that anything was going to happen, he bent down and kissed her cheek. The kiss made her jump just as though it were a sudden noise and not a kiss.

"Muriel," he began, "I didn't mean to . . ." and he looked very confused and hot. "I'm sorry, Muriel."

"We've really got to go back now," she said, "or else people will start calling. . . . But don't say you didn't mean to."

They walked back down the path without either of them speaking, but there was nothing awkward about the silence.

MRS. GOODWIN smoothed the washcloth on her knee, examining the stitches. It was as compact and complete as that small moment, but the sunlight on the lily pads was gone.

"Well, that's three of them finished," she said.

An illusion of having been present at a time and place in which I did not belong was so strong that I gave a start when I heard a footstep and saw the General crossing the living room.

"Well, well," he said, "have I interrupted something?"

His voice was playful, but at the same time he gave me a sharp questioning look.

"We were talking about kissing, Mel," Mrs. Goodwin said.

We all three laughed conventionally.

"How far are you along with it, dear?" Mrs. Goodwin asked.

"Well, frankly," the General said, "that magazine fellow ought to be in the Inspector General's office. I've only got to where I'm taking exams for the Point."

"I do hope you'll hurry things here as much as you can, Mel. Don't you think perhaps tomorrow I'd better go back to Washington? I won't start pulling wires."

"All right," the General said, "maybe it would be a good idea if you looked over the lay of the land—but don't wrap up any package for me before I get there, Muriel."

The idea of her going to Washington seemed to have lifted a weight from the General's mind.

"Now go back and tell them how you got into West Point," Mrs. Goodwin said. "Do you remember when we went to Nashua to call on Mr. Francis J. Garrity and I stayed outside and talked to the girl who was doing the typing?"

"Now wait," the General said. "I know you can do a lot, Muriel, but you didn't make that Congressman put me into the Point."

I believe they had forgotten I was there until I spoke.

"I thought Mr. Orrin Curtain was the Congressman who got you into the Point," I said.

"What a memory you have, Sid," the General said. "Orrin Curtain was defeated, when he ran again, by Francis Garrity, a Democrat. Maybe I wouldn't have dared go see Garrity if Muriel hadn't made me."

"Melville," Mrs. Goodwin said, "your *Croix de guerre* ribbon is twisted, and I think the palm is coming loose. Come here and I'll fix it."

He walked to the sofa and bent over Mrs. Goodwin and then as her hands moved toward the ribbons he kissed her cheek.

"Why, Melville," Mrs. Goodwin said, "you startled me."

"Come on, Sid," the General said, "let's put the show on the road." He took my arm and we walked out of the living room.

"Muriel's never happy unless she's running something," the General said, "and usually it's me. What were you and Muriel talking about? Did she ask you anything about Paris?"

"She was just asking if I had seen you in Paris," I said.

"Oh," the General said, "well . . . Was that all she said about Paris?"

"That's all," I said.

"Say, Sid," the General said, "when this project is over here. I think maybe I'll spend a day or two in New York before I go down to Washington."

"If I were you," I said, "everything considered, I would go right down to Washington."

"I don't know whether you would or not," the General said, "but then you're not me, are you? Damn it, Sid, let's go back and answer questions."

Miss Fincholt and Philip Bentley and Colonel Flax were waiting for us in the library and when we appeared they all stood up. It was natural for the colonel to do so, but I was surprised to see Miss Fincholt and Phil Bentley snap into it, too.

"Please don't get up," the General said. "Where were we?"

"You were just starting up to Nashua to see that Congressman," Phil Bentley said.

"Oh, yes," the General said, "Congressman Francis J. Garrity. Let's see. . . ."

He picked up a cigarette from the table beside him. Colonel Flax leaped up with his lighter, but Phil Bentley was ahead of him. "Here, let me, sir," Phil said. He would never have thought of making such a gesture a day before.

CHAPTER 14

Your Congressman Always Knows Best

IT WAS one Thursday afternoon toward the end of his high school senior year that Melville met Muriel at the square and they took the two-o'clock car to Nashua.

"Now, Melly," Muriel said, "what are you going to tell him?"

"Don't call me Melly," Melville said—he was feeling nervous already—"I'm going to ask him about getting into the Point, and I don't see why you want to go with me."

He wished she wouldn't act so much as though he belonged to her right there in the trolley.

"Just look him in the eye," Muriel said, "and tell him that you want an appointment for West Point, and don't scratch at yourself. Remember, he's there to do what people ask him."

Mr. Garrity's office was on the second floor of a business block on the main street. The only decoration in the outer room was a campaign poster displaying a youthful, vigorous photograph of a square-jawed man, beneath which was the simple device, "Garrity for Congress." There was nothing about the office to make anyone feel out of place or ill at ease, yet Melville's hands were clammy when he and Muriel entered it. At one end of the room, a redheaded, freckled-faced girl was pounding on a typewriter.

"Is Mr. Garrity home?" Melville asked. With a slight sensation of nausea he realized that he had meant to say "in" instead of "home."

"He's not home; he's inside," the redheaded girl said. "What do you want to see Mr. Garrity for?"

His mind was a perfect blank as he struggled for an answer.

"I want to ask him about getting into West Point," he said.

"Well, all right," the girl said. "Is this your sister?"

Melville felt his face turn beet-red.

"I'm not his sister," Muriel said. "I just rode up with him on the trolley to keep him company — from Hallowell. His name is Melville Goodwin. He reads about history and battles and he's very good in algebra and geometry. His father owns the drug-store. My name is Muriel Reece. My father is vice-president of the hat factory. It isn't much. There are three vice-presidents."

Then Melville finally found his voice, although he hardly recognized it when he began speaking.

"Say," he said, "can I see Mr. Garrity?"

"Oh," the girl said, and she and Muriel both began to laugh, "another county heard from."

Melville drew a deep breath.

"I asked you," he said, "can I see him, or can't I?"

"Don't get mad," the redheaded girl said. "You'd look kind of cute in a uniform, all over buttons. If I see you get one of those uniforms, will you give me a button?"

"I'll see he gives you one," Muriel said. "I guess I didn't get your name."

"It's Flynn," the redheaded girl said, "Patricia Flynn."

She rose and opened a door beside her.

"There's the cutest young couple outside, Uncle Francie," he could hear her saying. "They come from Hallowell, and the boy wants you to send him to West Point."

Mr. Garrity's whole appearance was an anticlimax after the campaign poster. Instead of looking like a leader of men, he looked like one of the older clerks in Osgood's Haberdashery.

"Well, young man," he said, "so you come from Hallowell. It's a fine place, and I have many fine friends there. What did you say your name was?"

His name was still Melville Goodwin.

"Well, well," Mr. Garrity said, "don't tell me that you are

the son of the Robert Goodwin who owns Goodwin's drugstore?"

"Yes, sir," Melville answered.

"Now, let me see," Mr. Garrity said, "didn't your father have Orrin Curtain's poster in his window last election time?"

"Yes, sir. My father is a friend of Mr. Curtain's."

"Well, now," Mr. Garrity said, "have a seat, Melville. There's nothing I like better than seeing a fine boy who wants to enter the United States Military Academy, but this is election year. What will people say if they hear that Francis J. Garrity has sent a Republican boy to West Point?"

Melville pushed back his chair and stood up.

Mr. Garrity said, "Do you love your country, Melville?"

"Yes, sir," Melville said.

"And so do I," Mr. Garrity said. "Stand up straight and let me look at you." Melville braced himself, and Mr. Garrity walked around the desk and stood beside him.

"Melville," Mr. Garrity said, "you wouldn't mind being in a picture with me in the papers, would you?"

"No, sir," Melville said.

"I want to figure this," Mr. Garrity said, and he pulled a pencil from his pocket and drew a pad of paper toward him.

"Now, let's see," he said, "the name is Melville Goodwin. Your grandfather served in the Civil War. It couldn't be that any of your family fought in the Revolutionary War?"

"Yes, sir," Melville said, "my great-great-grandfather. His name was Amos Goodwin."

Mr. Garrity wrote carefully on the pad.

"You wouldn't mind if I asked your principal for your marks?"

"No, sir," Melville said.

"Well, now, Melville," Mr. Garrity said, "you did the right thing coming here to see your representative. I'm not promising, but maybe you'll get a letter from me next week."

Mr. Garrity put his arm around Melville and walked with him into the waiting room.

"Say, Patsy," he said, "don't you think Melville and I would go well together in a photograph?"

"You'd look lovely, Uncle Francie," Patricia Flynn said.

It was never safe to discount luck. Melville was pretty hot that spring, as troops would have said about a craps shooter, and there was only one thing that remained on his conscience. He should have told his father all about Mr. Garrity and West Point. He simply had a feeling that his dream was so fantastic that speaking of it might shatter it.

It was six o'clock on an April evening and they were having boiled corned beef for supper. When Melville came downstairs his father was opening catalogue envelopes with his penknife and laying them in a neat pile without removing their contents.

"More stuff comes in the mail all the time," he said. "Oh, here's a letter for you, Melville." He was holding a long Government-franked envelope. "It's from Garrity. I guess he doesn't know that Mel's too young to vote."

Melville took the letter quickly and put it in his inside pocket.

"Aren't you going to read it, dear?" his mother asked.

"I guess it isn't anything much," he said.

"Why, Melville acts as though it were a love letter," Celia said.

"Well, it isn't a love letter," Melville told her.

"It's garden time," Mr. Goodwin said. "Be sure to tell Garrity you want radish seeds, Melville."

Melville could feel the envelope crinkle in his inside pocket as he leaned over his plate of corned beef and cabbage. He helped his mother with the dishes, and when she asked him if he was going to do his geometry in the parlor, he said he would take a lamp upstairs to his bedroom because it was quieter up there. He could still remember the two terse typewritten paragraphs.

Dear Mr. Goodwin:

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that I am nominating you for my principal appointment to the United States Military

Academy. As the Hallowell High School is not on the accredited list, you must take examinations at Fort Banks in Boston in the early part of February of next year.

Please call on me at my office at ten a.m. next Saturday, when I wish you to meet the representative of our local newspaper.

Very truly yours,
Francis J. Garrity

His thoughts became luminous. He was in gray, parading with the Corps. He was young Lieutenant Goodwin with his company, charging into cannon smoke. He was General Melville A. Goodwin, mounted on a horse not unlike Robert E. Lee's Traveler, and Old Glory flew above him and the bands were playing. He wanted to run downstairs and shout the news, but some shadowy suspicion that there might be a catch to it must have stopped him. Instead, he finished all his solid geometry—you had to be good at math and history and geography to pass the exams for West Point—though he knew that he must tell Muriel before he went to sleep.

He remembered walking softly down the creaking stairs to the narrow front entry, and he seemed to arrive on the Reeces' porch by some sort of levitation. Muriel opened the door herself.

"How about going for a walk?" he asked. "I've got to tell you something that's happened."

She put on her mother's coat with the squirrel collar, and they walked down the path to Prospect Street.

"Mel," she said, "what is it?"

"I've got the letter," he told her. "I'm going to West Point."

"Oh, Melly," she said, and then she linked her arm through his and pressed his arm against her.

"Muriel . . ." he began.

"Yes," she said, "what is it, Melly?"

"Will you marry me," he said, "if I get through West Point?"

"Why, Mel," she said, "I'd like to very much." She sounded as though he had asked her to go to the pictures in Nashua.

CHAPTER 15

A West Pointer Looks at Hallowell

ONCE WHEN he was in Baguio during his second tour of duty in the Philippines, Mel Goodwin had come across a book called *Merton of the Movies*. He had gone up to Baguio for a week end to join Muriel and the two children, who were spending the summer in the hills away from the heat, and he must have picked up the book at the club. In one part, young Merton prayed that he would be a great Hollywood actor and Melville had done almost the same thing in Hallowell after he returned home that night.

"Oh, God," he had prayed, kneeling down on the round braided rug that had come from his grandmother's house in Nashua, "help me pass the examinations and make me a good officer in the United States Army, for Christ's sake. Amen."

It was not a bad prayer either. He had made the same supplication many times in Cadet Chapel at West Point. He had finished in the first quarter of his class at the Point, and some people were of the opinion that he was not such a bad soldier.

Of course, he should have told his plans to his father immediately, instead of deciding to put it off until after his high school graduation. He never thought that there would be much of an article in the Nashua newspaper until his father showed it to him. There it was, on the front page, a picture of Melville standing beside Congressman Francis J. Garrity.

"Garrity picks Hallowell lad for West Point," he read. "In a surprise move that has silenced many critics in this city, Francis J. Garrity announced this afternoon that he has bestowed his principal appointment to the United States Military Academy

upon the son of a Republican voter who worked for his opponent in the last election. The lucky lad is Melville A. Goodwin, son of Robert Goodwin, popular Hallowell druggist. . . ."

Melville looked up from the paper and saw that his father was watching him.

"Garrity's pretty smart," his father said. "This will get him a lot of independent votes. It's funny. . . . I never knew you wanted to go to West Point."

It would have been easier if his father had been angry. His coolness and reserve showed the deepness of his hurt.

"I was going to tell you, I really was," Melville said, "but I was afraid there might be a catch in it."

His father took the paper and folded it.

"It's my fault; it isn't yours," he said. "I ought to have seen my boys more. Maybe I've been here at the store too much, Saturdays and Sundays and everything. I'll tell you what, suppose you and I take the Ford on Saturday and ride down along the Merri-mack and maybe you'll tell me all about it then."

His father must have realized that the family would not see much of Melville Goodwin again. It was June 1915 when he left Hallowell for West Point and he had \$20 for traveling expenses and a post-office money order for \$160 made out to the Treasurer of the United States Military Academy, to pay for his uniform and equipment. This money order was about all he needed to ask for from his father. As the train pulled out, he watched his father and mother and Celia standing against the background of oak and scrub-pine hills, waving to him from the bare wooden platform. Only later did he value the memory — after he came to realize how complete that parting was.

CHAPTER 16

Let Me Tell This One, Muriel

WOMEN, not men, are usually the ones who kiss and tell.

"Melville never was a great lover," Muriel Goodwin had told me, "but I must have always thought he was going to be.

I wish you could have seen him when he came home from West Point that first Christmas. He was so handsome, so distinguished. I didn't know then that he had just the usual polish that any boy gets at the Point. It made me want to cry when I found he was still Melville; at least he was with me. The Point makes leaders but it can't take men away from women."

Melville Goodwin only touched briefly on West Point's relationship to love. "It was certainly great to see Muriel again at Christmastime," he said. "Nobody knows what love is who hasn't been through plebe year at the Point, and that remark isn't original with me."

"General," Phil Bentley said, "do you think civilian love is different from military love?"

"That's a smart one, isn't it?" the General said. "But I'll tell you one thing, son. Those girls who marry shavetails the day after graduation don't know what they're getting into. Somebody ought to give them a briefing. I don't believe Mrs. Goodwin knew."

The General was watching Phil Bentley with cool disapproval.

"You see, son," he said, "different individuals have different aptitudes. I could never write like you, but then as I look you over, without meaning to be too personal, I'd say you wouldn't last six months at the Point."

Phil Bentley flushed slightly and then he laughed. "Frankly, I wouldn't want to last three minutes."

"All right," the General said, "then don't ask smarty-pants questions about military love and keep your tongue out of your cheek. I'm pretty tired of some of the cracks that boys like you make about the Point."

Colonel Flax was looking at me uneasily when Oscar entered, saying that lunch would be ready in 15 minutes.

"And Mr. Skelton," Oscar said, "Mrs. Peale has been trying to get you on the telephone all morning. She asked especially that you call her before one o'clock."

I did not want to look at the General or anyone else in the room—not after Phil Bentley's question about love.

"Go ahead, Sid," the General said, "go on and make your telephone call, and remember me to Mrs. Peale, will you?" General Goodwin cleared his throat. "Mrs. Peale was over in Paris with a writers' group in 1945. I had to give them a lecture on the Battle of the Bulge."

There was no reason for him to have said anything and, of course, he should have known better.

"Could you make them understand about the Battle of the Bulge?" I heard Phil Bentley ask. "It must have been a pretty complicated subject."

"General," Colonel Flax said, "there's only a quarter of an hour before lunch, sir."

It was five minutes of one when I called Dottie Peale.

"Darling," Dottie said, and her voice sounded a little edgy, "what have you been doing that you couldn't take a minute all morning to answer a telephone call? You're such a VIP now, darling, that you forget that other people may be busy, too. It just happens that we're giving an authors' luncheon today at the Waldorf and I ought to be at the head table right this minute."

"Well, well," I answered.

"Don't say 'Well, well' in that disagreeable way," Dottie said. "You know what I want, don't you?"

"Yes," I said, "I know what you want—in a general way."

"You're getting so very funny, dear," Dottie said. "All right . . . Is the General still with you—in a general way?"

"You don't mean General Melville A. Goodwin, do you?"

"Oh, please shut up, Sid, and pull up your socks," Dottie said. "How is he, darling?"

"He's fine," I said. "We've been in the library all morning, working on that profile."

"Darling, you know what friends I used to be with Phil. Do you think it would do any good for me to talk to him?"

"No, I think it would be a very bad idea," I said.

"Oh, dear, do you think he . . ."

She did not finish the question, and she did not need to.

"Yes," I said, "I do. You know Phil."

"Oh, dear," Dottie said, "I don't see how things get around the way they do. Has Mel asked about me, darling?"

"Yes, he's asked about you."

"Well, how do you think it would be if I motored out and we all had tea at five o'clock?"

"You stay right in town, Dot," I said. "Mrs. Goodwin's here."

"Oh, dear," Dottie said. "Sidney, you don't think she . . .?"

Again there was no reason for her to finish the question.

"Well, darling," Dottie went on, "there's something I want to see you about besides Mel. How would it be if you met me at the office and we had lunch quietly tomorrow, just you and I?"

"All right," I said, "I'd like to have lunch, Dot."

"You don't think you could bring Mel, too, do you?"

"No, Dot," I said, "no, no," and she laughed as though I had said something very funny. "What was this other thing you wanted to see me about?" I asked.

"Well, darling, I don't suppose it's any of my business. It's just a little something that worries me about you and Gilbert Frary."

CHAPTER 17

*"Nor Certitude, nor Peace, nor Help
for Pain"*

IF ANY boy wanted to go to the Point, the General said when we settled down again in the library after lunch, it was a good thing for him to start as a simple kid with a few essential loyalties. It was a good thing for this hypothetical lad to have been used to eating plain food, to sleeping in a cold room, to manual labor, and, above all, to telling the truth. A rich boy was Mr. Dumjohn or Mr. Ducrot just like you and he would have his past kicked out of him just as yours was going to be. You came out the other end more alike than you ever believed. This was what the Point was for. You learned to love and respect it, but perhaps respect was greater than love.

Mel Goodwin had never put his thoughts about West Point into any order until once, some years after graduation, when he had accompanied his commanding officer there. Colonel Savery had been invited to give a lecture to the cadets, and he had brought Lieutenant Goodwin with him to handle the projector. They had arrived early one spring afternoon and Lieutenant Goodwin had walked about by himself for nearly an hour. He had never been so deeply impressed by the Gothic mass of the buildings, so conscious of the memories enshrined within them. The Point was oblivious to his existence now. Yet he was still a unit of the long gray line that marched back to the dawn of its history; it was something to be a part of the Corps.

While he stood there by the Battle Monument, he made a rough list of what the Point had given him. For one thing, there was the coördination of his body. Even as he stood at ease, his

posture was correct. He had learned to ride and fence and box and swim. He had become passably proficient in golf and tennis. He had learned personal order and cleanliness and how to look anyone in the eye. He had learned truthfulness and respect. He was well grounded in mathematics. He had a good working knowledge of history and geography and of law and a reading knowledge of French and Spanish, although he had always been poor at languages. He had learned that if he were obliged to do so, he could turn his mind and hand to almost anything.

Yet, as he stood by the Battle Monument that day, harassing memories beset him. One was his fear that he would be busted out. He could still hear the voice of the cadet adjutant in mess hall, reading off the names of classmates who would leave the Corps. He could see Cadet Goodwin as Mr. Ducrot wiping off his smile and stepping on it and announcing in the mess hall the number of days till June graduation. He could see Cadet Goodwin braced on the edge of his chair, and running upstairs two steps at a time. He could see Cadet Goodwin in recitations and Goodwin on parade. He could still see Cadet Goodwin as a stag at one of the hops.

He had never been a "spoonoid," but like any cadet he had been obliged to learn his way around the dance floor at West Point. M. Viset, a French dancing instructor, was there especially to teach clumsy, gangling boys. Though he had never been around country clubs, the veneer of the Point was on him and he had learned the rudiments of party manners by his last year there—but those girls at the hops meant very little to him because Muriel Reece was his one and only, his OAO.

Because of the war, there was less time during his years at the Point for social functions and Muriel had not come to West Point except for one week-end hop, for Hundredth Night, and for a Summer Camp Show, until she came with her mother and the Goodwin family for the graduation and their wedding. He and Muriel were married in the chapel, the day after his graduation.



He was to report at Camp Merritt in two weeks' time to proceed to France in a school detachment.

He could not remember exactly when he received his orders or much about his wedding in the chapel. When you were caught up in the tides of war, you simply moved, a part of the machine. Their wedding in the chapel, too, moved by the numbers. The chaplain's usual advice was to wait a while and not get married the day after graduation, but, as far as he could remember, no one listened seriously to the padre, and he was glad he hadn't.

What more could he have asked than what was given him that June? He was marrying the girl he had always wanted to marry. He was a soldier, and the biggest war the world had ever seen was getting bigger all the time, instead of petering out as he was afraid it might after the German breakthrough in March. He was like a football player who had been sitting on the side lines, and now the coach was waving to him. That was the way he felt

and it was the way any shavetail ought to feel. It was a great time to be alive—in June 1918.

Muriel had gone to a secretarial school after he had left for the Point, and she had been in the front office of the hat factory for two years. It was a great relief that Muriel was able to purchase the railroad tickets after the wedding and arrange for a reservation at the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on 34th Street in New York. He had never realized what a capacity for leadership Muriel had developed until they took that wedding trip. The old Waldorf was a big jump from the barracks and he was only a kid. Everything around him was new, including his clothing roll and bedding roll and foot locker, but you'd have thought Muriel had been to the Waldorf a hundred times.

"Just follow the bellboys and me," Muriel said, "and ask for our reservation when you get to the desk."

All he had to do was to follow Muriel, eyes front, along a corridor with marble columns and to tell himself that he was an officer in the United States Army, legally married to the girl ahead of him. He had to make a deliberate effort not to stand at attention when he asked the room clerk if there was a reservation for Lieutenant and Mrs. Goodwin. He was not sure whether he should refer to himself as "Lieutenant" or plain "Mister," but "Lieutenant" sounded better, and he finally signed the register as "Melville A. Goodwin, 2nd Lt., Inf., USA, and wife."

He was still so dazed when they went up in the elevator that Muriel had to whisper to him to take off his garrison cap. For a moment he felt she was wrong until he realized that he was wearing no side arms. "Give each of the boys a quarter," Muriel whispered as they stood in the center of their room.

In all the years they had been married, he never had asked Muriel how she had learned about tips and hats in elevators.

"Why did you sign your name 'Melville A. Goodwin, 2nd Lt., Inf., USA and wife'?" Muriel asked. "You should have signed it '2nd Lt. and Mrs. Goodwin, USA.'"

He had never asked her, either, how she knew that one. "It's all right, Mel," she said. "What are you looking at now?" "The room," he said. "I should have asked how much it costs." "It costs a lot," Muriel said. "Eight dollars a day. But it's all right, there's the wedding-present money."

It was true that Mr. Reece and Melville's father had each given them \$100, but it would not last long at this rate.

"Just give me the money, Mel," she said. "I'll look after the expenses."

"What's in that room there?" he asked.

"It's the bathroom," Muriel said.

"What," he said, "a private bath?"

He did not mind when Muriel began to laugh. He did not even mind feeling like a plebe again in front of Muriel.

"Look," he said, "it's got a tub."

"Of course," she said. "Don't they have tubs at the Point?"

"We take showers," he said. "There wouldn't be time to let the water run into a tub."

"There's time now," Muriel said. "Why don't you take a bath?"

"What," he said, "right now?"

"Oh, Mel," she said, "don't be so silly. Go in and turn on the water, and I'll unpack our things."

"Not my things," he said.

"Mel," she called, above the running of the water, "hand me out your breeches." His hearing was as good as his eyesight, but he had felt that there must be some mistake.

"Your trousers or whatever you call them," Muriel said. "I want to count our money."

He walked into the bedroom in his shirttails and handed her his breeches.

"Don't wrinkle them, Muriel," he said. "What's so funny?"

"Just being married," Muriel said, "and I guess it's particularly funny being married to somebody from West Point."

The first night they were in New York, they went to a musical

comedy. After the show, he and Muriel walked down Sixth Avenue and passed an open-air shooting gallery. Some enlisted men behind them were singing a snatch of a popular song, "If you can fight like you can love, good night, Germany!"

"Melly," Muriel said, "let's see if you can shoot like you can love."

As a matter of fact, when he came to think of it he was a better shot than lover, or at least he had had more practice. It was a big elaborate gallery with strings of ducks, revolving pipes and balls bouncing on jets of water. Two infantry privates called out to move back and give the lieutenant a chance and the attendant handed him a .22, a nicely balanced little rifle.

"All right," he told Muriel, "I'll try the ducks," and he knocked all the ducks over, snap, snap. Now that he had the feel of the rifle, he went on to the revolving wheels of pipes and cleaned out three wheels of them, but by that time he had shot 50 cents' worth, which was enough money for that sort of thing.

"Go ahead and clean it out, Lieutenant," the men were saying.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Bud," the proprietor of the gallery said. "If you knock off the balls from the fountains, left to right, you can have all the shooting for nothing."

A crowd had gathered behind him. The balls were erratic, but Muriel was there and he decided to shoot fast, even if he missed.

"One," the men began to chant, "two, three, four; hey, look at the lieutenant — five, six, seven, eight," and then there was a groan.

"Oh, Melly," Muriel said, "you missed the last one."

"That's all right," one of the infantrymen said, "don't you mind what she calls you, Melly."

Melville set his rifle down carefully on the counter. It was his first experience with troops except for the well-trained personnel at the Point. If Muriel had not been there, he would have let the matter drop, but now he had to do something.

"What's your first name?" he said. He spoke quietly.

"Charlie," the soldier said.

"Charlie what?" Melville said.

"Charlie Thompson."

"Yes," Melville said, "but Charlie Thompson what?"

"Charlie Thompson, sir."

"Atta boy," the soldiers called, "give it to him, Lieutenant."

A good officer, he knew, should never get mad at troops. He was glad to remember that he had been adroit enough to smile.

"That's right," he said. "You guessed the answer. I'll give you \$5 if you'll knock off that last ball, Charlie."

"I couldn't shoot that good, sir," the soldier said.

He had been smart enough to know that he was as young as any of those boys and he had made his point, and he had done right, calling the soldier "Charlie."

"Well," he said, and he had the sense to smile again, "you're going where you ought to learn. Remember to squeeze and not to jerk, and hook up your collar and button up your pockets."

He smiled again at the troops and pulled out the bill that Muriel had left him to pay the gallery. "If there's anything left over," he said, "let these soldiers use it. Come on, Muriel."

The moral of the story was, you had to learn to handle troops right if you were going to the front and didn't want a shot in the back. Never let them get away with anything, but remember the human equation. . . .

"Say, Lieutenant, sir," one of the men said, "what outfit are you with?"

The man, being a sergeant, should have known better. According to military courtesy, he should have phrased his question in the third person, but then he was not in Melville's outfit.

"I haven't been assigned to any yet, Sergeant," Melville said.

"Well, I hope to God you get into ours, sir," the sergeant said.

"Why, thanks, Sergeant," Melville said, "and here's wishing you a lot of luck. Come on, Muriel."

"Why, Melly," Muriel said, "you sounded just like an officer."

"It might be well," he said, "if you didn't call me Melly."

"Yes, sir," Muriel said, "and I'm pleased you're assigned to my outfit, sir, and take off that hat when we get into that elevator."

It all made a pretty good story, if you told it among old friends, or even if you had to make yourself agreeable to some gauche young officer and his wife, and there was another moral to that story, too: don't let your wife control the situation all the time. Let her handle you, but you handle troops, and don't push troops too hard when they're on leave, especially in the States.

CHAPTER 18

"Who Pants for Glory Finds but Short Repose"

HEN Melville Goodwin received his orders to report at Camp Merritt, Muriel wanted to go with him and to stay somewhere in New Jersey outside of camp until his detachment finally sailed, but he told her that it was better to say good-bye right there in Hallowell. She would be all right because she could go to work again in her father's office at the hat factory. Yet even Muriel could not wholly understand his point of view.

"I know it's awful for you, waiting here," she said, "but I wish you wouldn't act as though you were so glad to leave me."

It never helped to remember the look on a woman's face when you were leaving her, even if she were as brave as Muriel. It was demoralizing to see a woman trying to be brave.

Women, even the best of them, could not help but be jealous of war. They never did wholly believe it when you said you would always be thinking of them and you never believed it, either. There was no use describing the details of parting because the

thing to do was to get going and to try to forget as much of those last moments as you could. He hated to admit, when he finally said good-bye, that he was glad to go.

ONE DAY after landing in France Melville Goodwin was on a train, and three days later he was at the headquarters of a division north of Château-Thierry, and an hour after that, with no food in his stomach, he was moving to the front as a replacement officer for an infantry regiment which was to attack at dawn. The Germans were retreating in the Château-Thierry salient.

There was a road in the dusk jammed with French cavalry. It was the first and last time he ever saw cavalry in any war. Next there was the sound of shells bursting in a patch of woods, and he was walking through the woods in the dark. Then he was behind the blankets of a dugout in a regimental command post.

"Take this officer up to C Company," the adjutant was saying.

He was outside again with a guide, stumbling through the dark. He did not even have a pack or blanket, but he did have a .45 automatic and one of those flat tin hats of World War I. He did not know where he was going and he had not even seen a map. The company command post was in a shell hole in the woods. Almost without his knowing how he got there, he was in the middle of an artillery duel. The 75's were firing over him and machine guns were chattering out ahead.

It was no joke in those Château-Thierry days to be out in front of American artillery. The artillery was firing short that night, though this was no one's fault particularly, since no one had located the front lines. In the pitch dark you could hear the shells crashing among the trees. Melville Goodwin was told to stay where he was instead of trying to reach his platoon in the dark.

In the morning, the night seemed to rise up slowly like a curtain, on a scene of distorted confusions. The orders were to advance at dawn through the woods, and Melville Goodwin went forward to take the command of the Second Platoon from a

sergeant. It was not the best way to begin with troops, walking in among them out of nowhere. Fortunately the sergeant was an old Army man with a face like a side of beef. His name was Riley and Melville did not need to tell him anything. "They've pulled out, sir," the sergeant said. "It's all clear just ahead."

When the infantry pushed ahead, it was like a practice maneuver. The artillery fire was slackening, because the guns were moving forward, and the Germans were pulling out of that salient so hastily that only light forces were engaged.

Of course, no officer, least of all a lieutenant in the first wave, could get the whole picture of an operation. Yet some individuals were born with a tactical sixth sense. It was an indescribable gift—"the feel of battle" Melville Goodwin had called it in a paper he had once read before the War College. You had it or you did not have it. He could see nothing except the men of his platoon walking through the woods, but at the same time he could feel whole divisions moving—reserves, artillery and supply.

His platoon was a machine and he was already beginning to examine it and to estimate its capabilities. The men were wet and their faces were drawn. They were tired but not too tired. They moved ahead cautiously but not nervously.

"Sergeant," he asked, "did the men have breakfast?" He thought that the sergeant gave him a peculiar look and he realized that "breakfast" sounded odd, though the word was quite correct.

"They had corned willy and hardtack, sir," the sergeant said.

They were better off than he was, but he no longer felt hungry.

"What about water?" he asked. "Are their canteens filled?"

The sergeant said, "We've about run out of drinking water."

"Then have them fill their canteens the next place where there's a well or any running water, and see that each of them drops in about six chlorine tablets."

"Yes, sir," the sergeant said, peering into the woods ahead. He knew that the sergeant must have thought he was a little snot, but still it was a sensible order.

He saw that the trees were thinning and that they were reaching the edge of the woods. Suddenly he heard machine guns on the right front and the crack of bullets passing close overhead. The sound, he always had thought, was like his mother's sewing machine — a mechanical staccato that frayed the nerves.

"Tell the men to lie down, Sergeant," he said.

Perhaps he should have given the order himself, but then the men had hardly seen him. They were approaching a line of resistance, a hasty improvisation by the enemy to facilitate retreat.

"Come with me, Sergeant," he said and they crawled to the edge of the trees.

A broad open field of hay lay before them, too short and trampled to afford cover. The ground ahead rose gradually for almost 200 yards to a low ridge crowned by another patch of woods. It was an almost classic defense position. When Mel Goodwin looked to his right he saw why the gun there had **revealed** its position, because a handful of bodies lay **sprawled** in **the** open field. In his interest, he raised his head too far and **another** machine gun opened fire from the woods directly on his front. He saw its flash near the trunk of a large oak tree.

He and the sergeant crawled back to report the situation to the battalion commander, a freckled, sandy-haired major. Lieutenant Goodwin saluted smartly. "Never mind that," the major said. "What have you stopped for, Mr. Goodwin, are you tired?"

Melville reported the situation concisely. He was even able to take a pencil and sketch the position in the major's notebook.

"Very pretty," the major said. "Take me up there and show me the original. We can't wait here all day."

They were faced with the same old problem, the balance of loss of life against the element of time. In World War I the machine gun was still an ace that was hard to beat.

The plan was improvised right there in the woods. An attack was ordered along the regimental front. Melville remembered that he was shaking, but he had the sense to note a fold of ground

about 75 yards in front that might afford some shelter. Beyond this he saw a depression that wound toward the gun emplacements on the hill. He pointed them out to the sergeant.

When he told the platoon to follow him, his voice had an unwelcome quaver. He had often dreamed, both asleep and awake, of leading a real attack, but now that he was in motion, the ground was not solid and he seemed to move with exasperating slowness. Then he found himself flat on his belly behind that bulge of ground with only half the platoon there with him.

As he lay there catching his breath, he saw that the whole advance had been checked halfway across the field. He might as well admit now that the chances of knocking out the gun were 50 to 1 against him, but his mind was focused on a single desire to get up that hill. There were 20 yards of open space between the rise that sheltered them and the winding hollow.

"Follow me," he called, but only the sergeant and a private went with him to the hollow. When he crawled up to the crest, he remembered that he rose to his knees, threw a grenade and fell flat. He hit the nest right on the button.

"Come on," he heard himself calling, "come on," as he ran through the trees to the second emplacement on the right. He came on it suddenly from the rear, and glimpsed the gray backs of the gunners before he tossed a grenade. The air was full of dirt and stones and the gun had stopped before he could throw another. Then it seemed as though everyone had followed him, not just the sergeant and the private. The attack had carried through.

The mangled bodies of those Germans around their gun brought home to him, all of a rush, the enormity of what he had been through. He staggered weak-kneed to a tree, leaned against it and retched. It was a mortifying anticlimax, but that was how the colonel, the regimental commander, found him. Beside the colonel was a French officer in horizon blue, and a few paces behind were some other officers.

When Melville saluted, his diaphragm and intestines were still



chasing each other inside him. "I'm sorry, sir," he said. "That's all right, Lieutenant," the colonel said. "What did you say his name was, Major?"

"I've forgotten, sir," the major said. "He just came up last night . . . but it ought to be Frank Merriwell."

As soon as the colonel laughed, everyone else joined him hastily and the joke settled Melville's stomach.

"I still don't have your name, Lieutenant," the colonel said.

"Goodwin, sir," he answered, "Melville A. Goodwin."

"Do you feel all right now?"

"Yes, sir," Melville said.

"Then walk along with us, Mr. Goodwin. This is Captain Bouchet."

It was only good luck that the French captain was there, itching to pass out *Croix de guerre*. Melville never knew until later that he was getting the Distinguished Service Cross out of it, too. He was pretty hot that day; it was all good luck. On the other hand, there weren't any colonels around to see him when he led a patrol across the Vesle River and returned with 16 German prisoners. No medal except a Purple Heart was passed out when he got his bayonet wound in the Bois des Rappes.

His service in France had taught him that he was adequate according to certain standards, and from the very beginning he had loved the life and he loved to serve with troops. He never forgot the lessons he had learned in World War I about team play and the soldier. He had learned how to speak the enlisted man's language, and he could speak it still.

There had been a lot of time to think while he lay in the hospital. He never forgot the columns of cavalry he saw on the road from Château-Thierry, pathetically waiting for a chance for action that never came. He knew that cavalry was on the way out, and he would never forget the thrill when he first saw a line of tanks clanking toward the front. Unlike a lot of young fellows around him, he never discounted the potential of the tank in a future war. He was already thinking of combinations of fire-power when he went to convalesce on the Riviera. Of course, other men were also thinking, in English and French and German — but the armistice was signed while he was on the Riviera, and an era was ended.

Lieutenant Goodwin was with the Army of Occupation for a while at Coblenz but he was sent home from Brest in June 1919, and it was only later that it struck him that his experience in

France had had certain limitations. In the years between the wars, when he heard officers discussing their leaves in Paris and the wine and the women and the sights of France, he was surprised at how little he could contribute to the conversation.

He remembered one incident. Late one afternoon he had gone on a walk by himself through Cannes to exercise his leg. A French girl spoke to him, a pale, hungry-looking girl. She spoke loudly and slowly, as the French sometimes did to a foreigner.

"Vous êtes très chic, mon lieutenant," she said.

He had to turn the words over painfully in his mind, and his answer was like a tough recitation at the Point.

"Non," he said, *"je ne suis pas chic."*

"Le lieutenant est blessé," she said.

"Oui," he said, *"je suis blessé."*

"Mais pas malade," she said.

"Non," he said, *"bonne santé."*

"Voulez-vous venir avec moi?" she asked.

The implication of the question escaped him entirely.

"L'amour," she said, *"couchez avec moi."*

He never forgot his feeling of embarrassed confusion. To make it still worse, there was the problem of answering in French.

"Mais je ne veux pas, mademoiselle," he said.

"La-la," she said, *"monsieur est sérieux."*

She was very nice about it and he never forgot what she said before she left him.

"It is a pity always to be serious when one is young."

Perhaps she had been right. Sometimes he wished that he had relaxed more when he was young. Perhaps he should have thought more of picture galleries and music, but the only music he liked then was band music and the notes of the bugle at retreat.

HE RETURNED to the States on an antiquated passenger ship filled with other unattached officers from every branch of the service. Getting back to New York was like landing on the moon.

"What did you do when you landed?" Philip Bentley asked.

"Why," the General said, "I called up Muriel, of course, and she said she'd come down to New York. I needed someone to lead me around who knew the ropes."

"What did you do after you telephoned?" Phil Bentley asked.

"After I telephoned," General Goodwin repeated, "I took a taxicab and went to the Waldorf and got a room and do you know what I did that night? I strolled down to that shooting gallery on Sixth Avenue and knocked off all those damn pipes. It made me think of Muriel."

The General rose from his armchair. It was late in the afternoon. "Let's break this up," he said. "Come on, Flax, let's go for a walk."

Phil Bentley took off his glasses and polished them. School had let out when the officers left the library. "Do you feel the way I do?" Phil asked.

"I wouldn't know," I told him. "How do you feel?"

"Exactly as though I were in the damn Army," Phil Bentley said. "I wish he didn't confuse me. Sometimes he sounds like the Rover Boys in Camp. He can't be as simple as he sounds. I wish I could get it straight in my mind why I should begin to like him."

CHAPTER 19

Just a Little Dutch Girl — with Her Finger in the Dike

HELEN was reading upstairs in our dressing room.

"Sid," Helen said, "just how long are they going to stay?"

"It can't be much longer," I said. "Mrs. Goodwin's leaving for Washington tomorrow. I'll take her into town myself. I'm

lunching with Dottie Peale. If I don't have lunch with her, she'll drop out here at any minute. You know Dottie. We can't let Bentley see her with the General."

"What do you suppose she really wants to do about him?"

This was something I could not answer.

"Well, anyway," she said, "as long as she doesn't do anything about you."

I WAS thinking next morning when Williams was putting Mrs. Goodwin's suitcase into the Cadillac that the Goodwins had learned all the techniques of saying good-bye to each other before an audience — half playfully, half seriously.

"Good-bye, Melly," Mrs. Goodwin said. "Now don't tell Mr. Bentley anything you shouldn't, and call me up tonight."

Melville Goodwin smiled at Helen and then at Mrs. Goodwin.

"Don't you worry any," he said, "I'm only going to tell him how the CO caught us skin-swimming at Moultric."

"Oh, Melly," Mrs. Goodwin said, "it was almost dark."

"Well, good-bye, Muriel," the General said, "and don't seduce any of the Joint Chiefs before I get down. Remember, they've got a lot of private rooms in the Pentagon."

It all showed that the Goodwins felt at home. When Mrs. Goodwin kissed Helen, she said we must come to visit them just as soon as they found out where they were going to be.

"You know, I can't wait," Mrs. Goodwin said when we started together for the city, "for Mel and me to have a little place of our own after Mel retires. Almost as soon as you get started in the service you begin to make retirement plans. That's why I bought my Chinese things in Tientsin, as part of a sort of hope chest, and I wish you could see the lace napkins we bought in the Philippines and the Meissen china Melville found in Germany."

Mrs. Goodwin was familiar with motor transport as well as with the art of making conversation. She took another washcloth from her handbag and began working on it. You would laugh,

she said, about the way service wives went on about service cars. Personally she made it a point never to bicker over transportation. The only time she complained was when by mistake Melville was given an old Chevrolet and a major on the post was assigned a Buick. Melville had been a major himself then, but Melville had the seniority. Mrs. Goodwin's hook moved smoothly.

"You've been so generous, looking after Melville, Sid," she said. "He seemed a little tired last night and he seemed worried about something."

"Worried?" I repeated.

Though I looked carefully ahead, I could feel that Mrs. Goodwin was watching me. "Melville says you are going to have lunch today with a mutual friend, a Mrs. Peale. He wrote to me about her from France. She sounds very interesting."

"Yes, she's pretty interesting," I said. "We used to work on the same newspaper together."

I could detect no change in her voice, but I could still feel that she was watching me and not her washcloth.

"It's queer how seldom Melville gets on, really gets on, with people outside the service," she said.

"I suppose it's because he leads a specialized sort of life," I answered. At least, I thought, I could get off the subject of Dottie Peale. "Last night," I said, "we asked the General what he did when he landed in New York in 1919. He said he called you up in Hallowell."

She remembered all of it very clearly. We were going down the Merritt Parkway, but Mrs. Melville Goodwin was leaving Hallowell to become an Army wife, and, watching her expression, I could imagine how she must have looked. She must have looked both very competent and very pretty.

"I wish you could have seen Mel," she said. "He looked a whole lot more like a soldier than anyone else in the Grand Central Station, but as soon as I saw him I knew Mel was just the same. He just said, 'Hi, Muriel,' and I said, 'Hi, Mel.' Then he

told me we were going to Fort Bailey. That was because of the medal. Everybody doesn't get to Bailey."

"Where's Bailey?" I asked.

"What?" she said. "Seriously, haven't you ever heard of Bailey? Any line officer knows Bailey. It's where they used to have the Small Arms School, out in Kansas."

That was where the Goodwins started housekeeping, down toward the end of officers' row. Officers' row looked over the parade ground, and there was a flower bed of begonias in front of the colonel's quarters, then came the officers' club with a star of elephant's-cars and salvia, and then the barracks. It was scorching hot in summer and miles away from anywhere. You could hear the machine guns going every afternoon out on the range. Lieutenant Colonel Crosby's wife had the rank because the post commandant was old Colonel Jones — "Jupiter" Jones, and he was a bachelor. "Jupiter" was his Army nickname and I must have heard of him. Sometimes they called him "Arapaho" Jones because he served in one of those last Indian wars when he was fresh out of the Point. Robert, their elder son, had been born there at Bailey. . . .

I had never heard of Fort Bailey or of Colonel "Jupiter" Jones, but I was at Bailey with Muriel Goodwin on the way to New York and the Pennsylvania Station.

"Good-bye, Sid, dear," she said as I left her with a porter at the station. Though I was startled when she called me "dear," I felt that I had known her for a long, long time.

It was ten minutes before twelve but Dottie Peale had asked me to meet her at the office early. It was always a part of Dottie's stage effect to show off that office of hers.

Martin Dever, who had been an editor at Peale House, was the one who told me most about Dottie's career there. He was the one who introduced her to Henry Peale, he said. It happened after I had gone abroad, when Dottie was on the book page of

the paper. She was superb at make-up and helped to spruce up the whole Sunday book section. When the paper sponsored a series of book-and-author afternoons, Dottie did everything, right down to helping the publishers drag authors to them. That was how she met Martin Dever. Then one morning when she was in Martin's office, Henry Peale came in.

"That was all there was to it," Martin said. "He wanted to ask me about the design for a book jacket, and Dottie said it ought to be plainer, and then he asked her into his office to look at alternate designs. They stayed alone in there for about half an hour and then they went out to lunch, and the next morning he asked me for Dottie's telephone number, and next he asked her to the theater, and so they got married."

After the honeymoon, Dottie moved right in, taking over the office next to Henry's, and in a year she had taken over the whole editorial and production department. Martin Dever could work for Peale—in fact, he had run the whole editorial department for him and a good deal of everything else—but six months after Dottie showed up, there wasn't anything left for him to run. She was terribly sorry when he finally resigned. She begged him to stay and she felt his leaving was all her fault.

"Martin, darling," she had said, "you can't leave me all alone here with Henry. I'm just a little Dutch girl with my finger in the dike."

He had to admit she was the one who got him the job in Philadelphia, and she had not done too badly since. In fact, she was a very smart cookie. That was all that Martin could tell me.

After Henry Peale's death, Dottie had moved the Peale House offices to a more modern building on Murray Hill, but Dottie's own office in a corner of the building was austere, with a gray steel desk, a gray carpet, a bare oval table and six gray upholstered chairs. There was nothing on her desk except a clock, a calendar and a blotter.

I found Dottie dressed in a severe gray tailored suit, softened

only by a ruffle at the neck. With her was a youngish man in a double-breasted suit holding a sample of paper.

"It's awfully kind of you to pick me up here, Sid," she said. "You won't mind waiting a minute, will you? You see what I mean, don't you, Mr. Taylor, when you hold it to the light?"

"Yes, Mrs. Peale," Mr. Taylor said, "you were perfectly right about it, and Mr. Jennings has checked."

"Good," Dottie said. "Be sure to get Mr. Harris himself on the telephone. . . . Oh, have you ever met Mr. Sidney Skelton, Mr. Taylor?"

"Why, no," Mr. Taylor said, "but I've often enjoyed hearing him. How-do-you-do, Mr. Skelton?"

"You might call me up at home and tell me what Harris says," Dottie told him.

When Mr. Taylor closed the door behind him, Dottie giggled suddenly, as though we were children. "Darling, you must admit I make them snap into it . . . What are you laughing at?"

"You know damn well what I'm laughing at," I said.

"Oh, Sid," she said, "I wonder why we never got married."

I looked at her and looked around the room.

"You know damn well why," I said.

CHAPTER 20

No Mothers to Guide Them

IT WAS preposterous to think of descending from my Cadillac, even if it was a company car, and walking with Dottie into the Peale residence and hearing Dottie say, "Hello, Albert," to her butler. When the door closed behind us, I was thinking that we were in a larger, more complicated version of Savin Hill. We were both inter-

lopers. We were both intelligent enough not to make fools of ourselves, but still we did not belong.

The house had been built in the early 1900's along pseudo-English, pseudo-baronial lines, and had a frontage of at least 30 feet. The entrance hall was paved with marble, and in one gloomy corner was a suit of armor on a pedestal. In the Peale house it looked moderately appropriate.

"We might as well take the elevator up to my study," Dottie said. "I don't believe you've ever seen it, have you?"

I had not seen Dottie's study. Nothing else in the house looked like her, but the study did. The rear windows opened on a little terrace with a row of potted fir trees. The curtains were yellow brocade, and there were Chinese carpets and a sofa in front of the fireplace and a desk with her typewriter and sharpened pencils and all her favorite books along the walls—and two very good Renoirs.

"Well," she said, "pour yourself a drink and sit down. My room's in front and I'm going to put on another dress, but I'll leave the door open."

I thought of the suite at the Ritz in Paris when I heard Dottie whistling in her bedroom.

"Darling," Dottie called, "are you all right?"

"Yes," I said, "I'm fine," and then she went on whistling.

I never thought, until I heard her whistling, what a difficult time she must have had at first being Mrs. Henry Peale. She had told me once that Henry's family and friends had been very kind to her on the whole and on the whole she had succeeded with them. She had accomplished this through the book business and then there were her theater friends. The Peale family had liked to be asked to her Sunday supper parties, since she knew everyone or almost everyone. Dottie had always been quite a girl.

When she came back into the room, she was wearing a purple dress and a gold bracelet and a topaz pin. She did not look at all as though she were nearly 40. She sat down on the sofa beside me

with that prim sort of schoolgirl posture that I remembered from the days on the paper.

"Darling," she said, "it's just like old times, isn't it? Snap out of it and get me some sherry."

Of course, I knew Dottie well enough to know that she was consciously setting this scene of old friendship because she wanted something but I had forgotten how entrancing she could be if she wanted to or how much she knew about things that interested me. She knew the broadcasting world a good deal better than I did, and she had some very good anecdotes about Soviet diplomats and domestic politics. I was reasonably sure that she did not listen to my broadcast every evening, but she gave the impression of having followed it consistently.

"I wish you wouldn't keep saying it's only your voice," she said. "You're better than all the rest of them. I'm so happy that I was wrong about you, Sid. Everything you did was subconsciously right, and here you are."

She smiled at me wistfully.

"I know I missed the boat," she said. "I'm a little envious, when I see you and Helen together, but not in a mean way, darling. I keep wanting to help you still."

"Dot," I said, "didn't you say over the phone that you were worried about me?"

Dottie assumed an expression that was partly cryptic and partly amused.

"Well, darling," she said, "you know how I'm able to sense things. When I think of you and Gilbert, I sometimes get intuitively worried, but I haven't really heard anything. Still, if anything ever should come up — anything like a break with Gilbert — you'll promise to come right to me, won't you, darling?" Dottie said. "You know how happy I'd be to help in any little way."

There was a discreet knock on the study door and Albert and a maid came in, pushing tables on wheels like room service in a hotel. It was a simple luncheon but it was very good — clear soup

and squab and mixed green salad and Camembert cheese and coffee and champagne.

When the servants had left, I suddenly felt impatient. "Come on, Dot," I said, "let's get down to what you really want to talk about. Why don't you tell me why you wanted to see me?"

Dottie put down her champagne glass.

"Now, Sid," she said, "that isn't fair but . . . well, all right. Tell me about Mel Goodwin, Sid. Has he asked about me?"

"I told you he had," I said. "Why shouldn't he?"

"Oh, all right," Dottie said, "tell me some more about him. Does he look well? Does he look happy?"

"Didn't he look happy in the pictures?" I asked her.

Dottie shook her head impatiently.

"Darling," she said, "I know exactly what you're thinking but it's none of your business. I wish you wouldn't act like a buffer state. Why is it you don't approve of my seeing Mel Goodwin?"

We were getting down to plain facts at last.

"Because I think it might upset him unnecessarily," I said. "I know it's none of my business, Dot, except I rather like him."

Dottie pushed a strand of hair back from her forehead.

"Pour me some champagne, will you, Sid?" she said. "That's right. Thank you, darling. . . . That's what I wanted to know . . . I'm awfully glad he still feels that way about me."

"Oh, my God," I said.

Dottie smiled and took a swallow of her champagne. "I wish you'd think about me just a little, Sid," she said. "Look at me. Can't you — a little?"

We both looked at each other for a moment without speaking.

"Listen, Dot," I said, "what else have I been doing?"

"Really, Sid," Dottie said, "if you had, you'd know how little I have in my life. You have everything I've always wanted. You're married, you have a home and children."

"Since when did you start liking children, Dot?"

Suddenly Dottie began to cry. It was something I had not ex-

pected, and I was quite sure that she had not expected it, either.

"Oh, Sid," she said, "can't you see I haven't anything? Damn it, I haven't even got you."

I could not think of anything consoling to say and I patted her softly on the back.

"Stop pounding my back," she said. "I'm not asking you to be sorry for me. I'm only asking you to be kind. It isn't asking very much, is it, to talk to me about Mel Goodwin? There isn't any reason for you to assume this protective attitude about him."

There was no reason at all, and yet I did have this attitude.

"Listen, Dot," I said, "why not face it? You're not going to help that poor guy at all by being interested in him."

"Darling," Dottie said, "I want to try to make someone else in this world happy. And I could do a lot for Mel Goodwin."

"His wife wants to make him happy, too," I said. "At least she has a few ideas."

"He isn't happy with her," she said, "in the way he ought to be happy with someone, Sid. She's always managing him. He told me so in Paris, darling."

I could imagine without undue effort what Melville Goodwin must have told her in Paris, and I did not answer.

"Aren't you going to say anything?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "For two days now I've been listening to him telling the story of his life. He doesn't know what is going to happen to him professionally. He's restless, just like you, and that's about all that you and he would have in common. He's never had the chance to see people like you, Dottie, and he's a very nice guy basically. The only way you can help him is to leave him alone."

I did not know that I would feel so strongly, but what I had said couldn't have been more maladroit, because I had only aroused her interest.

"Can't you think of anything to call him but a 'nice guy'?" Dottie asked. "Don't you think that I'm a nice guy, too?"

"You know what I think of you," I told her. "You've never been a nice guy." I stood up. "I've got to get back to the country."

"Oh, darling," Dottie said, "when you're angry, you're like a hero in a juvenile. Can't you and Helen bring Mel Goodwin around to dinner?"

"No," I said. "When he's through with us he has to go to Washington."

"Well, he can drop in here on his way, can't he?" Dottie said. "I'm going to call him up right now. What's your number in the country, darling?"

"I don't remember," I said.

"Never mind, I know it anyway," she said, picking up the telephone. "I want to make a person-to-person call," she began, "to Major General Melville A. Goodwin. . . ."

There was nothing I could do. While I pressed the elevator button, I could hear her speaking in her gayest, sweetest tone.

"Mel," I heard her saying, "Sid's here and we've been talking about you all through lunch. Aren't you getting pretty tired of it out there with Sid? When are you coming here to see me and tell me how you won the war?"

I had never thought until then of Mel Goodwin as a classically tragic figure whom the fates were conspiring to destroy. He was one of those Samsons ready and waiting for some Delilah to give him a haircut, and Dottie Peale was just the one to do it.

WHEN I reached Savin Hill, they were still at it in the library.

"Hello, Sid," the General said. "It's a funny thing, isn't it, that Sid can bring himself to go away and see pretty widows in New York when they've been taking pictures of me all afternoon."

"I thought it was about time to call in the photographers, Sid," Phil Bentley said. "We ought to be through by tomorrow."

Melville Goodwin shook his head impatiently. "I don't know why we should have taken up all last evening and this morning with this stuff between two wars."

"It's been very interesting," Phil Bentley answered. "Nobody knows anything about Army officers in peacetime."

"Listen, son," General Goodwin said, "we have our work and our wives and kids and problems, just like everybody else. How about it, Flax?"

"That's right, sir," Colonel Flax answered. "Damn it, service people are just like other people."

CHAPTER 21

Brave Days on Officers' Row

MELVILLE GOODWIN could not list off-hand the places he had seen, or the sequence of his duties. He had served in Hawaii, the Philippines, China and Panama. He could remember the temples and the blue robes of the Chinese in Tsingtao, but none of this mattered greatly in retrospect. If you joined the Army you saw something of the world, and you learned, naturally, about sanitation and the care of troops in the tropics and about insect pests and dysentery, but most of the time you were concerned with a way of life. Most of the time you simply saw the Army. The Army was a closed corporation, and the officers' corps, Melville Goodwin said, was largely personality. He had heard it said by outsiders that Army men gossiped like old women, always telling stories about Mike So-and-so or remembering something about Hank Somebody-else. But at any time you might be thrown in with Hank and Mike; and then you might be very glad to know what they and their wives were like and whether or not they enjoyed playing ping-pong and what they thought of a little Saturday's drinking.

Then, too, there was nothing more solid than an Army family.

The boys had been a heavy expense at times, even with free doctoring, but he would not have missed having them for anything, and neither would Muriel. He could remember Robert in his play pen at Bailey, on the square of lawn in front of the veranda. Charley had come along later when they were out in Oregon just before they went to the Canal. He could remember Charley in his pen, too, on another square of lawn in front of another veranda. It was always great to get back to the quarters and see Muriel and the kids, especially after someone had been chewing on you. Also, there were horses to ride and the tennis courts and the golf links and the Saturday nights at the club. It was not a bad life, the peacetime Army, if you did not stick your neck out. A lot of it ran together now in his memory, but there was one thing you never forgot, and that was your first post. He and Muriel started together at Bailey.

They were just kids and they had hardly been anywhere together and it was Muriel's idea that they should save on their travel allowance by going West on day coaches. The way you handled the various allowances that came to you over and above your base pay made a lot of difference in your living, and Muriel right from the start had a knack for squeezing out the last penny.

It was late afternoon when they got off the train at Bedeville. They hitched a ride on an Army truck to Bailey, Muriel in front with the driver while he sat out in the dust with a quartermaster sergeant. They jolted along the road for about half an hour between sagebrush and cholla cactus before they saw the reservation. He had to hand it to Muriel that she was not discouraged by being so many miles from anywhere, but nothing, when he came to think of it, ever discouraged Muriel.

When the colonel saw Muriel, he immediately asked them to supper. By the time they were moved into half a house at the junior end of officers' row, they were almost part of the family, and Mrs. "Silver" Crosby, the lieutenant colonel's wife, showed them around herself and called Muriel "my dear" and said they

must have a long talk about everything in the morning. Colonel Jones — Jupiter Jones — the post commander, was a bachelor just reaching the retirement age and he looked every year of it. Yet when he saw Muriel, he told her that he would have been married long ago if he had ever seen a girl like her.

"Oh, Melville," Muriel said when they were alone that night, "I just love Colonel Jones. He was so happy after dinner."

Melville, too, had observed that Colonel Jones was happier after dinner than before. He had been suffering from a cough before dinner and had excused himself several times to gargle his throat, and each time he returned, he was happier. The truth was that Colonel Jones was something of a problem, and the word was that everyone should cover up for the Old Man. Kansas was a dry state, but you should have seen the Old Man's cases of Old Home Elixir. "Young man," he told Melville once, "the Civil War would have ended a year earlier if General Grant had known about Old Home."

Characters like old Jupiter Jones amounted to little in one's professional career, but you always came upon Joneses here and there, and it was useful to know how to handle them. There was one time, he remembered, when Colonel Jones began firing his automatic from his second-floor window because he believed that Arapaho Indians were skulking about the house. Melville was the one who got there first. "Sir," he said, "please give that gun to me quick, there's an Indian attacking Muriel."

"Take it, boy," the colonel said. "I'll handle the rest of them bare-handed."

Stories like that would last for years.

Some of his oldest and dearest friends were among the younger officers who were on the post at Bailey with him. It was his good fortune, too, that he had been able to meet some of the ablest infantry officers in the Army who came there to the school. He might mention A. C. Grimshaw, and even civilians ought to remember Grimshaw's name in World War II. He came to the

school to deliver a series of lectures. They called him "Foghorn" Grimshaw because he spoke in a low, deferential voice.

Melville met him first over a chess game at the club, and he took one game off Grimshaw, too, which may have been why *Foghorn* took a liking to him. It was possibly due to knowing Grimshaw at Bailey as much as to his record in the War College that Mel got a staff job under "Tweaker" Beardsley in the middle '30's. It may have been a word from Grimshaw, too, as much as his record, that got Mel into tanks and to North Africa.

There had been quite a ripple of excitement when Foghorn Grimshaw had appeared at the school. The word had gone around that both "Black Jack" Pershing and Peyton March had said publicly that Grimshaw had one of the finest tactical and organizational brains in the service. When Mel Goodwin took a game off him at chess and played another to a draw, he did not realize at all what this might mean to him until he happened to be standing outside his quarters one day after retreat. Melville had just bathed and changed into fresh khaki and had gone out to look over the square of lawn that was drying up, when Major Grimshaw rode by on horseback with an orderly.

"Why, hello, Goodwin," he said. "Is this where you're living?"

"Yes, sir," Melville said.

"Have you a chessboard handy?"

Melville was very lucky. He had bought a pegged-in chess set when he was in Cannes and he had it in the house. "It looks cool on that veranda," the major said. "How about a game?"

It would have been conspicuous and out of line to have invited anyone like Grimshaw to his quarters, but it was different now that the major was inviting himself.

"Take my horse back to the stables, please, Murphy," the major said, "and thank you for a very pleasant ride."

Muriel was out on the veranda as soon as they were up the steps, and Melville was proud that she did not look flustered.

"I've just made some lemonade," she said, and then a while

later, after they had finished a game, Muriel asked if Major Grimshaw would not like to stay to supper. They weren't going to have anything but cold chicken and salad and iced tea, but then perhaps it was too hot to eat much.

He nearly dropped through the floor when Muriel spoke of chicken, but Muriel had run out in back and had borrowed it from the Cromleys. Muriel had heard Mrs. "Silver" Crosby say that Major Grimshaw liked cigars, and she had run all the way up the row to borrow some. She had also borrowed after-dinner coffee cups from the Buddingtons and had asked Colonel Jones if she could pick a few of his begonias.

During supper they began talking about the war, and Major Grimshaw apologized once, saying he was afraid the talk might be boring to Muriel, but Muriel said she had to learn about those things, being an officer's wife, and Melville simply would never tell her about them.

"Melville knocked out two German machine-gun nests," Muriel said. "He threw pineapples into them — isn't that what you call them, dear?"

"Now, Muriel," Melville said.

"That's just like Melville, Major Grimshaw," Muriel went on. "He never wants to talk about himself. Now, Melly, don't change the subject." He had to go on and tell about it after that, and as he did, he grew interested in the tactical problem and then the major began talking about tanks.

"I wish we had a sandbox here," the major said.

"Melly," Muriel said, "get a baking pan and get some sand from the Crosby baby's sand pile."

It turned out to be quite an evening when they mixed a little water in the sand. He always did have an instinctive enthusiasm for terrain. He began to forget who Grimshaw was as they moved from one subject to another, and he began criticizing things more freely than he should have. When Major Grimshaw left, it was almost midnight, and Melville did not realize how

much he had been sounding off until the major looked at his wrist watch. Then he imagined Foghorn Grimshaw's telling how he had spent an evening listening to a cocky kid lecturing on logistics and firepower.

"You made me sound like a divisional commander," he said to Muriel, "right in front of Grimshaw." They were standing alone in that tiny living room filled with all the furniture that no one else on the post wanted—because, of course, they were kids and almost anyone could rank them out of anything.

"But, Melly dear," Muriel said, there at Bailey at midnight, "you're going to be a general *someday*."

The funny thing about it was that Muriel had hardly seen a general then, except at his graduation from the Point.

SOMETIMES he wished that Army wives were not always watching and worrying about their men, but Muriel never showed the bitterness or competitive spirit of many other Army wives. She was a good sport and she was popular. When he got promotions, she never looked complacent and when he got passed over for something good, she did not complain. She backed him up the one time that he disobeyed an order and came close to a court-martial. It happened at the Fort Jellison Demolition School when there had been a problem of blowing up a bridge. A Captain Burdock was the instructor, and Melville had commanded the detail that had placed the explosives. When the thing had not gone off, Burdock had ordered him to remove the charge immediately, and he had refused, because of post regulations, to risk the men. He had ended up under arrest in quarters. He still remembered Muriel's face when he told her why he had come home early. He could only tell her that he was right according to the book. The charge should have been left for two hours.

"Well, anyway, you've still got me, Mel," she said.

Actually the charge blew up half an hour later and half an hour after that he was called to post headquarters.

"Now, wait," Muriel said. "Before you go, take a shower and put on a clean uniform."

The captain was in the CO's office and the door was not even closed, so that everyone heard Captain Burdock get his orders to apologize and everyone heard Burdock do it. Muriel was the one who fixed it up later by asking the Burdocks to come in to supper. It was not his fault or Muriel's that the captain was always called "Delayed-action" Burdock after that. Muriel still sent a card to them every Christmas.

MELVILLE GOODWIN could go on endlessly with his stories once he was in the mood. Most of them seemed to me to illustrate nothing except a snail-like advance upward on the service list—a list which was governed entirely by seniority until 1935. The General kept saying that he hated nothing more than officers who pulled wires and sucked up to their superior officers, but you could catch a glimpse of Muriel Goodwin through the General's verbiage, dusting him and brushing him and showing off his right points to the right people by skillful indirection. Yet obviously his own abilities were the factors in getting him where he was. No woman could push a chump up to two stars.

He was never happier in his life, he said, than when he was assigned to command a company in the Philippines in Colonel Curly Whittell's regiment. Melville had been attending a lot of schools. It was good to get down to basic fact, and no matter what anyone said, Infantry was fact. All the special branches and the bright boys in them, the Artillery, the Signal Corps, the Tanks and Aviation, had no other basic purpose than to push ahead the Infantry.

Company A, when he took it over, was not bad, but the food and the drill were mediocre and so were the uniforms. The first thing he did when he took command was to interview the top sergeant, because the morale of the company and everything else was in the hands of the top kick. The top sergeant of A Com-

pany was a sullen-looking man named Politz, who had already served three hitches.

"Now, sergeant," he said, "I want to be frank with you. I'm ambitious and I want to get ahead, because I have a wife and two kids, and I'm going to make this the best damn company in the Army. I want you to help me do it." He could tell from Politz's expression that he had seen officers come and go, so he had to say something to make it stick.

"You think I'm handing you the old line, don't you, Politz?" he said. "All right, I'll have to show you. I'll back you up if you'll back me, and if you don't, I'll bust you. First off, I want you to be the best-looking top sergeant in the regiment. Report here at two this afternoon, and I'll take you to the post tailor myself."

He could see that Politz did not like it and neither did the mess sergeant when he got after the cooks, but he really turned that company inside out, and in the end they were all a team from top to bottom, including the junior officers, one of whom, "Long John" Gooch, he asked for later as his chief of staff in the Silver Leaf.

Day and night he was out there. He would go over every man from head to toe, as though they were kids getting dressed up for a birthday party, and you should have seen his men at guard mount. There was always wife trouble and girl trouble and drinking trouble in the company, and he was always ready after retreat to listen to troubles personally. No matter what engagements Muriel had made for him, she had to break them on the nights of the regimental boxing matches. When the men began to spend their own money at the post tailor's so that they could have their breeches and blouses like Goodwin's, he knew that everything was in hand. When the word got around that Goodwin would go right down the line for anyone in A Company, he knew that he was getting where he wanted.

Years later, he could always figure logistics in terms of live

troops. He could reach decisions by looking at the faces of troops. He had learned this from A Company.

There was nothing that made him more pleased and proud than hearing from other people what a really top-drawer girl Muriel was. Muriel knew all the stories and the jokes and the special type of flattery that made the big brass feel good, and yet she could also turn right around and make all the young kids just entering the service feel right at home. It made him proud that Muriel had so much faith in him, though when he overheard snatches of what Muriel was saying about him to the big brass, he would laugh and say that Muriel overestimated the situation. Muriel would always start by running him down a little. She would say, for instance, she sometimes thought that man of hers was such a perfectionist that people under him would resent it. Yet back there in the Philippines the men in that company of his had really adored him, though she was sure she did not know why, and when he got orders to return to the States, Sergeant Politz and a little enlisted-men's committee came calling at the house, bringing a silver cigarette box. . . . The box was presented to *her*, of course, to get around Army regulations. . . . Melville was just as hard on his own two sons as he was on troops. She was sure she didn't know why his sons were always following him around and always calling for Daddy when they went to bed. . . .

Muriel kept after his bridge game, and then she went to work on his golf. That paid off pretty well when they were stationed around Washington, but by then Muriel had found out somehow that fishing and generals seemed to go together. When he finally got his majority, he could play good poker and bridge, not to mention chess. He could play fair golf and he could cast a fly and he always had been excellent at skeet.

"You really have the makings of a good field officer now," Muriel told him, "and don't say I haven't worked on it."

Of course, this was partially a joke but not altogether. There

was a lot to the Army in peacetime besides routine duty and professional qualifications. Some officers were good dancers and some were fine piano players and singers, but accomplishments like these, Muriel used to say, weren't sound, and Muriel may have been right. There was Sewell Beebe, for instance. When Melville Goodwin was serving at Schofield on Tweaker Beardsley's staff, everybody wanted "Soo" around because he could play the ukulele and he had a fine baritone. Yet Beebe was also a fine officer with brains and ambition. It surprised Melville, when a staff job was open, to find Tweaker Beardsley turning Beebe down. Melville had been serving under General Beardsley for about a year then, and he felt that he was enough of a member of the family to stick his neck out. "Soo's a good officer, sir," he said. "He wouldn't fit so badly in Operations."

Tweaker Beardsley took a cigar out of his left-hand desk drawer and chewed the end of it for a while.

"Give me a light, will you, Mel?" he said.

Melville was ready, because Muriel had seen to it that he carried a pocket lighter when he went to work for the Old Man.

"He looks all right on his record," the Old Man said, "and maybe he is, except that he sings. I don't mind music personally, but Beebe is too good a singer. We'll scratch Beebe and take on 'Plugger' Hume. He played right guard, didn't he, his last two years at the Point?"

"Yes, sir," Melville answered.

"That's more like it," the Old Man said, "and, Mel, just as an older man to a younger one, don't go sticking your neck out for singing officers. You might be misunderstood."

"Yes, sir," Melville said.

The Old Man's cigar was out, and he asked Melville for another light. "When you're choosing personnel," the Old Man said, "select a good sound poker player or a golfer or someone who likes fishing. Those types have stability. Put the prima donnas in Intelligence but keep them out of Operations."

Of course, this prejudice about singing was somewhat personal with old Tweaker Beardsley. Melville once bet Muriel that he could pick at least 50 generals who had sung in glee clubs between the wars. Nevertheless, Muriel still did not think it helped if an officer was too funny alone with a ukulele or a piano, and she was very glad that Melville never sang with a uke.

"But, Melly, dear," she said, "it might be a nice thing to ask Plugger Hume and Betsy over for Sunday lunch and we'll ask the Beebes, too, and Soo can bring his uke."

It was great to hear Soo singing that Sunday under the coconut palms with the trade wind blowing, but Plugger Hume walked right across the *lanai* and all the way around the living room and back on his hands. He was sound and he made a good assistant in Operations.

THOSE years had been like the moving belt on a production line, and Melville Goodwin and his contemporaries had taken their places on the belt by the numbers. Some had left to go into business. Others had met with death, accident and illness, and one or two had been pulled off by the high command. The rest of the crowd had stayed on the belt until the very end, logical candidates for a star. Even some of these end products broke down when a more than theoretical strain was placed on them. Combat was the final test.

Melville Goodwin, as he once said himself, was basically a competent military mechanic. He might not have the global approach of a planner in the Pentagon but he could look at the road and guess what lay around the curves. Everybody could not be a Napoleon, and an armored division was just about his dish. That was a show he had really learned how to handle—but, without boasting, he could handle a corps or something larger. At any rate he had graduated from the Command and General Staff School at Leavenworth with a recommendation to command a corps in wartime.

Besides the Command and General Staff School, he had attended the Army War College, and he had done his share of staff work in Washington. But somehow active service in the field had spoiled his taste for sitting around conference tables or reclining in map rooms. Sometimes he wished that Muriel would stop thinking about three and four stars. A lot of his colleagues were also shaking around loose like him, looking for stars — and they had a lot more jokers up their sleeves and a lot more horse-shoes in their pants than he had.

Goodwin was still a major back in 1940 and only a lieutenant colonel at the time of the maneuvers in '41, but it was interesting to remember how things started to chirk up in the service after Hitler's march to the Rhineland, and the blowoff at the Marco Polo Bridge. You began to feel that maybe you hadn't missed the boat being in the Army. Still, after Dunkirk it looked as though the whole show was folding up. It made him very restless and he found himself short of sleep. They were at Benning — he was on the Infantry School staff as Tank Instructor at the time.

"Melly," Muriel asked him, there at Benning, "have you heard from Foghorn Grimshaw lately?"

Of course, as everyone knew, General Grimshaw was in the office of the Chief of Staff in Washington.

"I suppose he's still living in Georgetown, isn't he?" Muriel said. "I haven't written Ellen Grimshaw a letter for a long while, and they sent us a Christmas card. I don't believe they even know that Robert has entered the Point."

When he got orders to go to Washington to attend a conference of observers back from Europe, he was sure that Muriel's letter had nothing to do with it. Foghorn Grimshaw was very glad to see him and asked him to come to Georgetown for the night. The General said he might be wrong, but confidentially he did not see how we could keep out of that show in Europe indefinitely. There were going to be a lot of chances for bright

young men. Melville was still a bright young man to Foghorn Grimshaw, and everybody began to see that this was the sort of war that demanded younger men.

CHAPTER 22

Right Under "H" in the Dictionary

IT WAS after 11 o'clock when Melville Goodwin had reached those prewar months in Washington. He stopped and looked slowly around the room as though he were trying to gauge the effect of everything he had said. Then he smiled at Phil Bentley. It was that appealing smile that always made him look so young.

"Say, Bentley," he said, "right out of the horse's mouth—have I made a damn fool of myself up to date or haven't I?"

I could see that Phil Bentley liked it. The General had learned how to handle Phil.

"No, sir," Phil said. "You've made a lot of sense."

Obviously Mel Goodwin was pleased, but his glance did not leave Phil Bentley's face. "In the Army," he said, "you've always got to take loyalty for granted from the top down and from the bottom up. I'm trusting you, son, and I've got my neck way out. You can raise hell with me if you want to. Maybe there are some people around who would enjoy it if you did."

"You're going to see everything I write," Phil Bentley said, "and if you think any of it raises hell, I'll change it."

Coming from Phil Bentley, this meant a great deal, and I wondered if the General realized it. His eyes were still on Phil.

"You see, I'm just a simple guy," he said. His using that expression surprised me, because I had applied it to him so often myself. "You've got to be a simple guy if you lead troops in com-

bat, Phil." It was the first time in all those interviews that Mel Goodwin had called him "Phil." He had shown perspicacity in waiting so long.

"Just the same," Phil said, "I'd hate to meet you in a poker game."

Phil Bentley knew something about the brass himself. Nothing ever pleased them more than being told they were good at poker, and Mel Goodwin laughed.

"Phil," he said, "we'll really have to try it some day."

He had called him Phil once more to show it was no mistake. I was looking at Mel Goodwin again, as Foghorn Grimshaw must have looked at him in Washington. He was a very finished product. He was the sort of person whose name would be bound to come up for some big spot.

The General flicked up his wrist to look at his watch.

"Well," he said, "just a few yarns about North Africa tomorrow morning. Let's plan to end this by lunch tomorrow if that's all right with you, Phil," he said. "Good night, bright-eyes." He smiled at Miss Fineholt, and then he turned to me and punched me softly on the chest.

"Sid," he said, "stay down here for a minute and explain me to them, will you? And, Sid, stop in and see me before you turn in, will you? Come on, Flax, let's get out of here."

AFTER they left, Phil Bentley took off his glasses and polished them carefully.

"Sid," he said, "he really seems to like me, doesn't he? Maybe I'm learning about the Army. There's one thing that interests me. Take someone like Goodwin, his humdrum life, all that existence by the numbers. Suddenly he gets more power than anyone ought to have and an automobile and a plane and a permit to kill off people. I don't see anything in the life he's lived that makes him capable of using that power intelligently. There's a gap somewhere. I wish I could find the gap."

I could see it, but it embarrassed me to point it out to realists like Phil Bentley and Myra Fincholt.

"Don't you see, Phil?" I said. "You can't put him into any ordinary category. Don't you see he's a hero? It's the power and the glory. I don't say that I approve of heroes. I don't say that they look so well in peacetime, but he's a hero and he can't help it."

I saw Miss Fincholt gazing at me tolerantly, but Phil Bentley looked startled. "Listen, Sid," he said. "Don't you think you're going off the deep end?"

"No," I said, "the trouble is we don't like to admit there are heroes any more. You've been listening to a hero tonight, perhaps not grade A but grade B. If you take Goodwin that way, everything fits together. He wouldn't have put up with what he went through if he hadn't had the power-and-the-glory vision."

Phil Bentley put on his glasses. "Now, wait a minute," he said, "are you trying to make me believe that every officer in the regular Army is a hero?"

"A lot of them think they may be heroes someday," I said, "and that's why they like the life."

There was something behind all that Melville Goodwin had said that was dedicated and magnificent and undemanding of justification. It was not his fault that opportunity did not permit him to exhibit intestinal fortitude all the time. He would have been very glad to do so, as I endeavored to point out to Myra Fincholt and Phil Bentley before I said good night.

As I walked upstairs, I was still thinking so intensely about heroes that I almost forgot that Melville Goodwin had wanted a word with me. I experienced a short sense of anticlimax when I saw him in the main guest room in his undershirt and trousers with his shoes off, but he still looked as though he could slip back into everything if a whistle blew. His shoes were in perfect alignment at the foot of his bed. His coat was on its hanger in

the clothes closet. His military brushes were in the exact center of the tall bureau and through the half-opened door of the bathroom I could see his shaving brush, shaving stick, toothbrush, tooth paste and safety razor all in a meticulous row on the glass shelf. There was only one detail that I found disconcerting. He was wearing steel-rimmed glasses, and it had never occurred to me that he might need glasses for reading. He wore them, I saw, because he was examining a pile of photographs.

"Sit down and look them over, Sid," he said. "This bunch has just been rushed up from Washington. What do you think?"

He watched me anxiously when I sat down and examined the pictures.

"News services do better than the Army Pictorial Service," he said. "Don't you think so? I had a lot taken of me in Normandy and a lot up with the Silver Leaf, but these are better."

There were candid shots of Melville Goodwin from every angle, a stern Goodwin, a smiling, a sad Goodwin. The photographers had obviously struggled for informality, but the strange thing was that not one of them showed him in a grotesque or ungainly pose. He was as photogenic as a Hollywood star.

"You certainly look sharp," I said.

He accepted it as a fact.

"You learn to," he said, "with troops looking at you all the time. I'm trying to pick out the best one to pass around."

I knew what he meant by passing one around. I thought of the rows of signed photographs I had seen on walls or bookshelves in officers' quarters.

"Muriel collects them like postage stamps," he said. "Maybe it's not artistic but it's good to look around and see your friends. . . . I think I'll use this one."

"That one looks fine," I said.

"You don't think it looks too much as though I were going to chew off somebody's rear, do you? It doesn't look too much like old Vinegar Joe?"

"You don't look like Vinegar Joe," I said.

"Muriel said to be sure to get one of you and Helen together, Sid," he said. "We want you in the gallery."

"That's where we want to be," I said, "permanently in the gallery. I feel I've come to know you as I never would have otherwise—what with all this personal history and reminiscence."

"I'm glad if I've made a hit with you, Sid," the General said. "I admire you personally. You've got a lot on the ball."

"Not as much as you," I said. "I'm superficial and you're not. You see, you don't need to be superficial."

The General was not thinking of me or my problems at the moment. He took off his glasses and put them in their small black case, and I was curiously relieved to see him without them.

"Sid," he said, "get me my fountain pen, will you? It's in my blouse pocket in the closet." It was an order, but his asking me showed that he considered me a member of his group.

"Here you are, sir," I said.

He picked up a photograph and wrote across it diagonally in a firm bold hand. "Here," he said, "from me to you."

Across the photograph he had written, *To Sid, with admiration and affection, Mel.*

"Thanks, sir," I said. "I'll value this always."

"Oh, forget it, Sid," he said, "but I mean every damn word of it." He coughed and cleared his throat. "So you had lunch with Dot in New York, did you?"

The elaborately weary way he leaned back in his chair was faintly amusing because subtlety was not one of his strong points.

"She called you up, didn't she?" I said.

"That's right," he said, and he coughed again. "You didn't suggest she call me, did you, just to cheer the old man up?"

"No," I said, "no, it was entirely her own idea."

It was disturbing to see him lean forward and to see his whole face light up. "You mean she thought of it all herself?" he asked.

"Yes, all herself," I answered.

He was smiling his youngest smile. I was alarmed to see him look so happy.

"I'm having dinner with her tomorrow night," he said. "*It really will be nice to see Dot again. I sort of thought she'd forgotten all about me. She never answered my last two letters.*"

There was no use warning anyone about things like that — but I felt that I had to say something.

"Oh, that's the way she is," I said. "It's off with the old and on with the new. You don't want to take Dot too seriously, Mel."

"Thanks for the briefing, son," he said. "I guess I wouldn't have had that invitation if I hadn't spanked that Russki in Berlin. All the same, it will be nice seeing her again. Maybe I need a little relaxation — off the record, Sid."

"Well, don't forget you have a record," I said.

"Oh," he said, "everything doesn't get into a 201 file."

"Perhaps not," I said. "I was just thinking of Ulysses coming home from Troy. You recited a poem about him once at the Ritz in Paris. Remember?"

He looked at me hard, as though he wanted to pull his rank.

"What has Ulysses to do with it?" he asked.

"Well," I said, "when he was sailing home to rejoin his wife, he put wax in his ears so he couldn't hear the sirens sing."

There was a moment's tension, and Melville A. Goodwin's face grew red, but suddenly he laughed. "Damn it," he said, "it hurts me to see an educated boy like you fall down on mythology. He put wax in his *crew's* ears, son. He had his men tie him to the mast." Melville A. Goodwin had an almost flawless memory. "And anyway, there aren't any sirens around, son. There's only Dottie Peale, and I don't take her seriously."

Even in his undershirt surrounded by his photographs, Mel Goodwin possessed a quality in which I needed to believe. That must have been why I let myself go further.

"All right, you're not exclusively Ulysses, but you're a combat general. I've even heard the boys call you 'Muddy Mel.'"

"Son," he said, "you ought to write citations. Go right ahead."

"And what's more," I said, "you're Horatius at the bridge. 'And how can man die better . . . Than facing fearful odds . . . For the ashes of his fathers . . . And the temples of his Gods?'"

He had been smiling, but he stopped and raised his eyebrows.

"No kidding, Sid?" he asked.

"No," I answered, "not in the strictest sense."

His face was sterner and sadder than it had been in any of those candid photographs.

"That's right," he said, "it isn't entirely kidding. Maybe I've got a little of that stuff. You need it in the show, and now the whole show's over. There's one trouble with acting in those shows. You get keyed up to them, and I'm not dead. That's the trouble with it—I'm still alive. You've handed me a pretty fast line, son, and maybe old Horatius Ulysses Goodwin had better turn in now and get some sleep. Good night, Sid."

"Good night, Mel," I said.

"Here," he called, "come back here. Damn it, you forgot your photograph."

WHAT was it that I had felt that night about Melville Goodwin? I had reacted toward him as he himself had reacted long ago to that Decoration Day parade in Nashua. If he was not great, he had great memories. He had his 201 file and his record and I may have recognized its value, having so slim a record of my own. For me, there was no sense of achievement. There were no 201 files or service dossiers in civil life.

I thought of him at the Ritz in Paris, reciting Tennyson's lines on pushing off and smiting the sounding furrows. He was pushing off again. He had to keep on pushing because he had forgotten how to stay still. He had been in too many big parades. He had drunk too long from the golden cup that held the wine of power and glory.

I thought that Helen would have been asleep long ago, but she called me as soon as I was in our dressing room.

"I haven't seen you all day," she said, "except to look at you across the table at the officers' mess. I'm beginning to feel like Mrs. Goodwin."

"You couldn't," I said, "not really."

"You look worried," she said. "Are you worried about Gilbert Frary?"

I told her I could not keep my mind both on Gilbert Frary and the life and times of Melville Goodwin.

"Well, tell me I've been wonderful through it all," she said.

I told her that she had been wonderful through it all.

"All right," she said. "Open the window, Sid. Things don't feel right this evening. I feel as though we were all in *Julius Caesar* with a lot of omens."

I hesitated to tell her that I had begun to feel that way myself.

"Sid," Helen went on, "what's going to happen about Mel Goodwin and Dottie Peale?"

"Now, Helen," I said, "what makes you think anything is going to happen?"

She looked at me for a moment and then she shrugged her bare shoulders. She had beautiful shoulders.

"Sometimes you're awfully obtuse," she said. "Don't you know that Mrs. Goodwin knows all about it? Anyone can see she knows. You only have to look at Goodwin, Sid. I'd know if it were you."

"Well, it isn't me," I said.

"I know it," Helen said, "but it used to be you."

There was no reason whatsoever for her to bring up the subject. I had told her everything about Dottie Peale and me.

"That was before I ever saw you, Helen," I said.

"Oh, Sid," Helen said, "Dottie's never worried me."

"Then why did you bring her up?" I asked.

"I didn't," she said, "but now we're on the subject, she made a

pass at you this afternoon at lunch, didn't she? Not much of a one but a sort of one, didn't she?"

We looked at each other for a moment. She was smiling.

"What makes you think so?" I asked.

"It's so easy to tell about those things — the way you looked before dinner when you said you had lunch in her study. Why else would she have you in her study?"

"Suppose we get back to Goodwin," I said.

Helen laughed, although I could not see what was funny.

"Oh, Sid," she said, "you only had to see the way he looked after she called him up this afternoon. It was like something in 'The Song of Solomon.' Now kiss me good night and say you love me, darling."

After the light was out, Helen spoke again. "Darling, do you know what I think? I think she wants to marry him."

"Now, Helen," I said, "what should make you think anything like that?"

"Oh, Sid," she said, "anyone can see she's looking for a man. Don't you see the General's new? He's different from all you other boys. Can't you put yourself in Dottie's place?"

"No, I can't," I told her.

"Well, I can," Helen said.

When she spoke again, I was half asleep.

"Sid," she said, "another thing."

"What other thing?" I asked.

"Gilbert Frary sent me a big box of orchids this afternoon. There are twice as many as he's ever sent before. They're in the icebox. Good night, darling."

THE GENERAL and Colonel Flax were already in the living room, waiting for breakfast, when Helen and I arrived.

"Good morning, my dear," he said. "Sid, we've really got to get activated this morning. I want to leave for New York this afternoon."

"Oh, Mel," Helen said, "Sid showed me your photograph and what you wrote on it. I love it."

"I meant every word of it, my dear," the General said. "I'm proud to think I'll be somewhere in this house."

"I'm proud, too," Helen said. "Sometime soon you and Muriel must come again without all this interviewing. I love Muriel."

"That reminds me," Helen said, and she glanced at me in a meaning way. "I have a little present for Muriel—some orchids. They'll keep until you get to Washington."

I could see the way things were going. Helen was right in the groove that morning.

"Why, that's very kind of you, my dear," the General said, "but frankly I don't know how I can handle orchids."

"They won't be any trouble," Helen said. "They're all packed in a box."

The General had estimated the situation, and now he was taking action.

"I can't think of anything Muriel would like more," he said. "There's only one little hitch." He frowned and clasped his hands behind his back. "It may just be that I won't be able to get to Washington tonight. I have a few duty calls to make in New York. I ought to drop in at First Army Headquarters as a matter of courtesy and see Bud Hodgkins there. We were at the Point together, and Bud may ask me to spend the night. That's why I can't be sure about the orchids."

"Oh, dear," Helen said, "but perhaps you could put them in the refrigerator. Colonel Hodgkins will have a refrigerator."

"General Hodgkins," Colonel Flax said.

"Oh," Helen said, "I'm sorry—General Hodgkins."

The ranks were forming already.

"I'll be going to Washington tonight, sir," Colonel Flax said. "It will be a pleasure to leave the flowers for Mrs. Goodwin."

The General smiled. "Good," he said, "thanks, Flax. That's the best way out of everything."

I knew that Helen was looking at me, but I did not want to look at her. "Let's go in and get breakfast," I said.

"We've got to get moving," the General said. "Say, Flax, you were in the landings at North Africa, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir," Colonel Flax said, "I went in with 'Bolster Two.'"

"'Bolster Two,'" the General said. "'Pinky' Perkwell was with 'Bolster Two.'"

"Yes, he was, sir," Colonel Flax said.

"Pink and I served at Benning once," the General said, "but we missed connections in North Africa. I was with 'Heinzy' near Tunis in 'Bullpup' and I never did see anything of 'Bolster Two.'"

Once I heard someone say in France that any general above the one-star rank carried his headquarters around with him mentally, even if he was not attached to anything. General Goodwin had developed an instinct, of course, for imposing order wherever he went, and Phil Bentley and all the rest of us had instinctively fallen into our proper echelons. Breakfast at the stroke of eight was part of the system, and following breakfast came the brisk ten-minute walk in the open air. This last morning, Melville Goodwin did not even say, Come on, Sid. He simply said, Sid, and in 30 seconds we were outdoors in the fresh October morning. We started down the drive in close-order cadence.

"There was a wind last night," he said, "but no rain. This is damn good maneuvering weather."

"Yes, sir," I said. "The ground's solid underfoot."

He looked at me. "Those orchids!" he said. "What made Helen think of sending me to Washington with a bunch of orchids?"

"Well, you see," I said, "Gilbert Frary sent them to Helen. It's what Gilbert would call a gracious gesture."

"If anyone sent Muriel a lot of orchids," the General said, "I'd put an interpretation on it."

"Maybe I should," I said, "but Gilbert's always making gracious gestures."

"Now, there was a colonel when Muriel was at Baguio . . ." the General said, "'Slink' Somerby, ought-seven at the Point . . ." I waited expectantly for Melville Goodwin to go on about Slink Somerby, but he was silent, and we walked for a while in cadence. "Muriel was really a sharp-looking gal in Baguio," the General said, "but she never did have man trouble. There's only one thing wrong with Muriel."

The General was thinking out loud, but I wished he would not think out loud quite so confidentially.

"I wouldn't say this to many people, boy," he said, "but there comes a time when a man has to talk to a friend who has a broad-gauge, tolerant view. You have a service-type instinct and a service-type loyalty. I observed it the first time I saw you. You're like me; you're loyal from the top down and from the bottom up. Now, don't interrupt me. Let me make my point."

I had not the slightest intention of interrupting him.

"Now, let me make my point," he said again. "There's only one thing wrong with Muriel. She's always taking over. You know, sometimes Muriel reminds me of the British. Did you ever collaborate with the British?"

"No," I said.

"When you get around a table with them," the General said, "you shake hands with Sir Gordon Fewks, KCB. Then you shake hands with Field Marshal Sir Guy Douglas Jones-Smyth-Jones, KCB, CBS. Then, before you know it, there they are, right in control, telling you what to do. Up there near Antwerp there was a limey division on my left flank, and you wouldn't have known we had won the Revolution. I might have been a Canadian or an Aussie."

We reached the main road and turned right oblique across the field to the stables.

"Now, Muriel's like those limeys," the General said. "She instinctively assumes control, and she always does it for the best. It may be that I'm not quite as adjusted to Muriel as I was, because

I've been overseas for quite a while and sort of on my own. I know Muriel can't help it. She assumed control just as soon as I stepped off that C-54. She's got it in her mind to get me a desk somewhere at the Joint Chiefs. Damn! I don't seem to be adjusted any more. You see what I mean?"

"Yes," I said, "I see what you mean. Now take Helen . . ." but I stopped. There was no need for bringing Helen into it.

"That's exactly what I mean," the General said, "everybody has personality problems."

I felt as removed as a doctor or a priest.

"There's one thing I'd like to get straight," he said. "Has anything happened between you and Dottie since Paris? I get the idea that you don't like her any more."

"Oh, let's skip it, Mel," I said. But of course he did not want to skip talking about Dottie.

"There's one funny thing about me, Sid," he said, "that I don't understand. Any time I dance with a pretty girl twice on Saturday night, there's a raising of eyebrows and a lot of kind advice. Other people seem to be able to raise hell and get away with it, but when it comes to me taking a day off . . . Good Lord! Eisenhower or Clark or Bradley or somebody gets me on the carpet. The whole damn Army wants me to be true to Muriel. What are you smiling about? Do you think that's funny?"

"Yes," I said, "a little funny."

We turned right oblique to the house.

"Let's get this straight, Sid," he said. "I know where I am and what I'm doing. I just want a few moments off, just a few moments out of a hectic life to talk to someone who listens to my ideas. Dottie always listens. She even likes some of my ideas."

"That's right," I said, "Dottie always listens," and I wondered if he knew he had opened himself like a book and had guilelessly turned page after page.

The General drew a deep breath. We had almost reached the house. "I just wanted to give you a little briefing, Sid, so you'd

see there's nothing serious about this," and he smiled that very young smile and nudged me with his elbow. "And besides, everything's secured. Flax is taking those orchids to Washington."

CHAPTER 23

In No Sense a Call on Santa Claus

I FOLLOWED the General into the library and closed the door.

"Let's get this thing cleaned up, Phil," he said. "Where did we break off last night?"

"You were back in Washington," Phil Bentley told him, "in the summer of 1941."

Melville Goodwin laughed and sat down by the fireplace.

"It was really hot that summer," he said. "Everyone, as I remember, was sort of crazy with the heat. . . ."

MELVILLE GOODWIN was a liaison trouble shooter down in Washington, shuttling back and forth among high echelons for A. C. Grimshaw, who had already attained a temporary two-star rank. He never mentioned Muriel's place in this picture to Phil Bentley, but he did take up the subject of Muriel with me privately.

Muriel, he said, came right up from Benning to Washington to win the war, and they had a few differences of opinion as to where he should fit in the scheme of things. The whole town was overcrowded and he could not rustle up any living quarters for Muriel and young Charley. He had wanted them to stay where it was cool until he could find out what the score was. He had no time for family life. When he was not being sent somewhere around the country, he was at the Department during all his waking hours. Whenever he got back to the room he occupied in "Shorty" Telfer's apartment, he was in his sack in five minutes.

Of course, he must have known that Muriel would never keep out of Washington. However, he did think that she might have warned him that she was coming, instead of just appearing at Shorty's apartment with Charley, as though she had been airborne. It meant that for five days Muriel and Beatrice Telfer had to share the main bedroom while Shorty took over the guest room and Melville had the studio couch and Charley used a bedding roll on the living-room floor. They all used one bathroom, and he was always forgetting about Charley and tripping over the bedding roll when he got home at night.

Finally, Muriel called up Enid, Bud Joyce's wife, whom she had not seen since Schofield. Bud had rented a little house in Alexandria, and Enid told them to move right in with them and share expenses, even before she took it up with Bud. When old Bud came home to find the whole Goodwin family, he remarked that war was hell in Alexandria or anywhere else. But Bud and Enid kept Muriel and Charley right there through the whole war, and they were all still good friends at the end.

There was another complication when Muriel came to Washington. As Bud said, the gals made up a general staff of their own and began doing long-term planning. Bud, with limited duty because of disability, was not much for Enid and Muriel to work on, but Melville was really good material for two bright girls, and Muriel's thinking was always around the top of the heap. He did not want to be on any staff. Somebody had to fight the war, but Muriel wanted him to be on the administrative side, where the big brass might notice him.

One night in August when he had a few minutes alone with the chief in his office, he brought up the subject of the Louisiana maneuvers and expressed a sort of wish that he might get down there with a regiment or something, but Grimshaw only said that he was needed right where he was.

"And besides," he said, "I think Muriel has some pretty sound ideas about you. Why don't you leave things to Muriel and me?"

They had recently spent two Sundays at the Grimshaws'. The General liked to cook hamburgers in his back yard at Georgetown, and Muriel was very proficient with outdoor grills. He did not want the General to think that he differed with Muriel, and it was quite a problem to think up an answer. "Muriel really can cook hamburgers, sir," he said. "Muriel can stir up anything."

He was relieved that the Chief seemed to see what he meant. "Don't you worry about Muriel," the General said. "Muriel intuitively knows what's cooking."

"Yes, sir, she certainly does," Melville said, "but I don't want her to overdo me on both sides."

"Mel," the Old Man said, "Muriel never overdoes anything, but maybe you and I both had better go look over those maneuvers. I may be wrong, but we might both get a few ideas."

It was the best news he had heard in a long while. When they were down there he was able to get some experience with simulated tanks before he was yanked back to Washington. You could never tell what was in the Chief's mind, and he never knew why he was being kept on ice. When he asked for a job in the Philippines just before Pearl Harbor, the Chief turned him down flat. He was still sweating it out in the spring of '42 when suddenly the Chief sent him out to Arizona to observe desert maneuvers. He only got the connection when work began on the North African planning—"Torch"—and he was promoted to temporary colonel. It was not until September that the Chief said the word, and then he dropped it casually.

"Mel," he said, "some of you younger fellows will have to be going over. Maybe you'd better start thinking about packing."

Two weeks later his orders were cut for Paisley, where they were training the armor. Muriel cried half the night when she heard he was going to Paisley because she was certain he would be lost down there. There were lots of rumors, but "Torch" was all top-secret.

Her feelings were hurt when he gave her the word that she had

better not follow him down to Paisley. "But you'll be there for a year," she said, "before you go overseas."

Muriel could not be right about everything. She only got the point when he flew up to Washington to say good-bye, and, of course, she could not ask him where he was going. Secret orders never did help home life, and, curiously enough, Charley was the one who came closest to guessing it, because Charley was a smart kid.

"Say, Dad," he said, "I'll bet you're going after Rommel."

He always remembered this. Charley thought a lot of him and knew he could lick anyone. "No," he answered, "I'm going up to the North Pole to help out Santa Claus."

"Shucks," Charley said, "you wouldn't be packing khaki pants along with your woolens if you were going to see Santa Claus."

The only thing to tell him was to believe in Santa Claus and to take care of his mother. Sitting in the living room in Alexandria looking at Muriel and Charley, he realized how big the break was going to be, even though it was something for which they had all been waiting. He and Muriel had been together ever since he had come back from the AEF. They had been everywhere as a family unit, even as far as Tientsin, and now it was all over. There would be no Muriel where he was going, to guide him or to talk to the boss.

"I wish you wouldn't behave as though you were going to a surprise party," Muriel said.

"Come now, Muriel," he said, "you wouldn't want me to be out of this show."

"I just wish you didn't make me think . . ." she stopped a moment ". . . that you're glad I won't be around."

"Now, Muriel," was all he could think of answering. "Now, Muriel."

"Melly," she said, "you're all I have."

"Now, Muriel," he said, "you've got the boys."

The mention of the boys pulled everything together, and be-

sides, Muriel was a service wife who knew a wife must not upset things when the Army was off to war. "Forget what I said, will you, Melly," she told him. "Of course you're not glad you're going — except at the same time you can't help but be."

THERE was no wonder that he looked as though he were going to a party, as Muriel had said. He had been working for quite a while to get dressed up for that party. He had the equipment to make a stab at any job that was handed to him. What was more, he learned when he got to Africa that he was able to say to hell with all this accumulated knowledge when necessary. He was not weighed down by all his intellectual equipment. By the time North Africa was secure, even though he got a shell fragment in his shoulder before the show was over, he was pretty handy.

You had to learn fast in North Africa if you wanted to be around next day. Sometimes he felt like Rip van Winkle when he saw the self-propelled guns and the tanks and the jeeps and the tactical air cover and compared them with the stuff around Château-Thierry in the other war. Nevertheless, the basic elements were the same.

After the landing he was up ahead on the way to Tunis with a tank unit known by the code word "Force Goodwin." If they didn't reach Tunis before the jerries, you could blame it on the mud and roads, because they certainly tried to make that play. He began to realize in a few days that you had to blow every instrument in the band. When it came to a pinch, you had to be an artilleryman or an engineer or a tank specialist, and you never knew how things would be balanced or grouped from one day to the next. It was always raining when you wanted air cover, and the gumbo on the roads was like glue.

If he wanted, he could give a good lecture about Kasserine Pass, but now he was not talking before the War College. His tanks and some other units that came under his command took a whipping there, but they pulled out all right, and maybe he had a little

to do with this. Anyway, some people still thought that he had.

In order to refresh his memory about North Africa and subsequent operations, the General produced a packet of letters he had written home. He read excerpts from them to Philip Bentley.

Dear Muriel,

Shorty, who is going over to have a little talk about certain things that have happened, says he will get this to you. I'm in the base hospital with a piece of hardware in my shoulder, but I'm walking around already. . . . I walked out of it under my own steam, without running to the nearest exit, and no one else did, either. They were a fine selfless bunch of kids. All they need is a little straight talk and they'll do anything.

If you read the papers maybe you'll know what all this is about. I'd like to read the communiqué myself. It will have to be a masterpiece because we really got a bloody nose. . . . I took over the cover-up job, between you and me, without consulting Heinzy. It looked for a while like old Custer making a last stand with a lot of Sitting Bulls around us. I thought maybe I was going to be Custer, but they dug in when I got some heavy stuff around their right end. I mean they thought it was heavy, and we walked off.

Don't worry and don't start pulling strings. I am not going stateside because I shall be fit for duty in three weeks.

By the way, they came around this afternoon and pinned something on me and took some pictures. You can ask the chief about it if you want. Now, don't worry, I'm feeling fine. The word is the shoulder won't even be stiff. Give my love to Charley and Robert.

With love, Mel

THIS LETTER was all he had ever set down regarding his part in the Kasserine Pass action, except for his report and recommendations. The staff work was faulty, and a lot of people in back got the wind up. The order to withdraw came at three in the morning — when anyone physically in touch could see that there would have to be a holding action along the high ground on the front known as Area 20, which overlooked a track along which the

enemy would obviously move part of his armor. It was an elementary problem of buying time. When Melville Goodwin received the order, his chief, Arty Watson, saw as clearly as he did that a complete withdrawal would leave everything wide open. Arty Watson began sending back everything that was feasible, but half an hour later mortar and 88 fire began dropping on them.

Mel Goodwin was still with his chief trying to straighten things out when one of those 88's landed under a weapons carrier, and a minute later *he* was chief. By the time it was daylight he was alone with his combat team all dug in, plus three 155's and four tanks, one of them disabled. It was light enough by that time to secure some information. The jerries were coming right down the track just where he expected them, tanks and trucks and everything. It was something to remember, watching that column snaking toward their position over that Godforsaken country, with the sun just rising. He waited until they were on the level ground in front before he let them have it with everything available. He always believed that if there had been more firepower available they might have turned back permanently. As it was, they overestimated his force, and they were confused when he got his tanks firing into them well on the left. It took personal persuasion to keep everything cracking, but just the same, it was a good fight.

By afternoon what was left of his group was still holding the high ground in Area 20. They had bought the time, and there was no use hanging around any longer. He sent back the wounded and everything that could roll, but a lot of equipment and dead remained back in Area 20. His shoulder had been bandaged and it had stopped bleeding, but the wound may have made him lightheaded. Nevertheless, he kept everything under control all the way personally, and he could still put one foot ahead of the other when he walked into headquarters and made the report. His memory was vague as to just what he said, but other people told him later.

The story was that he saluted old Heinzy, which he probably did, since his right hand was all right, and then he said:

"There's been a little trouble up in Area 20, sir, but we'd all like to start going back as soon as we've had some coffee."

That was what they said he said, though his recollection was hazy. But there was one thing he did remember that pleased him. When he walked out of the headquarters—and he was still walking—he heard a master sergeant say, "The fighting bastard."

That meant a lot to him, coming when it did, because his shoulder was full of red-hot needles and his left arm was numb. The man who had spoken was standing with three or four others beside a jeep, and Mel Goodwin walked right up to him.

"Son," he said, "if I go first, I'd like to have you write those words on my tombstone."

HE WAS in the hospital when Task Force Headquarters was re-organized. In May he did desk work in Algiers because the medics were still checking on his shoulder. He got his star in June '43 but did not see the Sicilian show or any more fighting until he was on the beach at Salerno as an assistant division commander. He was a specialist in armor by then and he knew it. When he was yanked out and sent to England to take command of the Silver Leaf Armored in preparation for the cross-Channel invasion, he knew that he was equipped to take armor anywhere, anytime and anyhow, and that was all there was to it. He wrote some of his thoughts in a letter to his wife in April 1944.

Dear Muriel,

I don't see what harm there is, when you get this, in asking the chief if he can tell you confidentially about the job they've handed me over here.

Do you remember when we bought Robert the electric train the Christmas we were stationed at Sykes? Do you remember how

Bob looked, just as though the train and the tracks had dropped out of the sky, and how he kept walking around and around in a sort of daze as though he couldn't believe it and then how we couldn't pry him loose from that electric train for weeks? Well, that's how I feel about this Thing and all the lovely gadgets that go with it. I feel just like a kid at Christmas and maybe sometimes I act that way. I keep getting up in the middle of the night and hopping in a jeep just to see it's all pinned down and hasn't moved somewhere else. . . . Believe me, it's going to be good, and I think I'm going to know how to work it. I ought to after that Italian business, even if I finally bust a gut. . . .

All that worries me is that this island may sink with what we've got on it, even with the barrage balloons to hold it up, but that's an old one, isn't it? I'm glad Bob's moving out. I wish I might have seen him, but tell him from me I know he'll be good. How could he help it, considering who his mama is? The washcloths will come in handy the next time I have to hit the dirt. Give Charley a slap in the pants and tell him I'll write him tomorrow.

With love, Mel

OLD P. T. Barnum should have been in preinvasion England because it really was the greatest show on earth. It was something to be a part of that show and to have been right in the first team with the Silver Leaf Armored.

Mel Goodwin paused, and we could see him thinking, half happily and half sadly. "You know," he said, "I used to be a good pistol shot, and I had the sweetest .45. It fitted into my hand so that every line of my palm seemed to fill some part of the grip. I really think I could have plugged the head out of a dime with it snap shooting. It got to be a part of me, that .45."

The General held his hand in front of him as though he were gripping the memory of it.

"Now, that gun," he said, "was sort of like the old Silver Leaf. Of course, nothing can be precise that's made up of a number of thousand human beings, but by and large the Silver Leaf was an

efficient unit according to any set of standards. At any rate my greatest moments were with it. I guess I was made to head a division like the Silver Leaf. Everybody's made for something, and maybe the better you get at doing one thing, the less good you are at coping with other things . . . maybe."

The General's face had a sad, half-empty look. It was the first time I had ever seen sadness in him.

"Well," he said, "where's the Old Silver Leaf now? It's all in pieces like one of those alarm clocks I used to disassemble when I was a kid. It isn't anywhere. What's going to happen to people like me? Maybe I was useful once, but what's the point, when I'm really not wanted any more? Maybe I ought to be pushing daisies along the Rhine with a lot of the old Silver Leaf crowd."

Colonel Flax looked uncomfortable. From the Public Relations angle such a conclusion indicated an emotional instability that was not for the good of the service.

"Now, General," he said, "you don't mean that."

Then the General must have realized himself that it was not for the good of the service.

"I guess I didn't phrase my thought quite correctly, Flax," he said. "The thought I was trying to convey is, I can never feel sorry for anyone who was killed clean in the line of duty. Frankly, I've never been greatly interested in death. Old whisksers with the hourglass is always hiding around some corner, isn't he?" The General laughed, and looked relieved now that matters were back on a firmer basis. "Let's see," he said, "where was I?"

There was a curious pause. For a second or two no one seemed to remember where the General had left off.

"I guess you were about ready to hit that beach in Normandy," Phil Bentley said.

"That's right," the General said, "it was Omaha."

We all waited for him to go on, but he did not continue and then I knew that he was empty and finished. "You know," he

said, "I think you've got about all I have to give. Let's break it off at Omaha." He glanced at his watch and stood up.

"What I want, Sid, is a drink and a bite of lunch, and then I'd better kiss the girls good-bye. Get yourself braced for it, Myra."

It was the first time he had called Miss Fineholt "Myra" and that concession was like the dropping of a curtain. Phil Bentley must have known how things were. There must have always been a time in interviews when it was useless to go further.

"All right, let's call it a day, sir," Phil said. But now that the show was over, we were reluctant to leave.

"You get my point, don't you?" the General said. "There comes a time when you can't blow your own horn any more. The rest of it is what you might call straight military history."

"General," Phil Bentley said, "I want to thank you for everything. I must have done 30 or more of these interviews and some of them have been tough. Well, this one hasn't been tough at all."

"And Phil and I wonder if you'll sign us each a photograph," Myra Fineholt said.

It was exactly the right touch, the photograph, and as she pulled two out of her brief case, I could see that Mel Goodwin approved.

"Well," he said, "I didn't know this was coming. Flax, lend me your pen, will you?"

To Myra, he wrote on Miss Fineholt's photograph, who took down all of Operation Windbag, With love, from Mel.

To Phil, who made the old man stick his neck out, he wrote across Phil Bentley's picture, and is too good a guy to chop it off, With admiration and affection, Mel.

"Say, Flax," the General said, "how about going out and whistling for drinks?" The operation was over but headquarters was still intact. In fact, I was almost embarrassed when he remembered where he was.

"Forgive me, will you, Sid?" he said. "I'm just like Muriel. I'm always taking over."

CHAPTER 24

Once More the Sirens Sing

SAY, FLAX," the General said, as we had a cocktail in the living room. "Upstairs in my room there are two parcels on top of my kit bag—some things I've been saving for Sid and Helen. They don't amount to anything, but they do have an association value. Would you mind asking Oscar to bring them down?"

In spite of the casual way he put it, our journey together had meant something to him, also. When Oscar brought the two parcels tied up in brown paper, I could not help remembering the postwar days when everybody began pinning medals on everybody else.

The parcel he gave to me contained one of those ugly Luger automatics that had passed almost as currency in the early occupation.

"I suppose you own one of these things already," he said, "but this is a special Luger. It turned up when they were searching Goering's baggage. It belonged to old Fatso personally, and here are the papers to prove it."

I held the thing as though it were a hot potato, and everybody laughed.

"Is it loaded?" I asked.

"That's funny," the General said. "I've had it all this time and I've never thought to look. Hand it over here, Sid."

It was impressive to watch him with the Luger. He handled it in an expert, half-contemptuous, professional way, breaking out the magazine with a quick one-two motion.

"By God," he said, "it *is* loaded. I wonder what was the matter

with our boys. Here, Flax, you keep the ammunition. Maybe Mrs. Flax might like it. And hand Helen her little bundle, will you, Flax?" the General said.

"Why," Helen said, "what a lovely tea cloth."

"It was right on the table in the bunker in the room where Hitler shot himself," the General said, "but the stain on it is tea, and here's the paper to prove it, signed by the Russian Intelligence. I got it at one of those vodka parties when we were still hotsy-totsy with the Russians."

"Oh," Helen said, "it's lovely." I recognized the tone, though the General did not, as one she employed whenever I gave her something that she could not imagine how to use.

"Just from me to you, dear," he said, "and Muriel particularly wanted you to have it."

I wondered fleetingly what grisly relic he might be saving for Dottie Peale. It was bound to be good, although I could not think of anything that might outrank Fatso's gun and Eva Braun's tea cloth. It was the direct measure of his gratitude, and I could not help but be touched.

"Why, son," he said when we both thanked him, "they aren't anything. I wish they could be the Hesse jewels," and then he thought of Phil Bentley and Myra Fineholt. "I wish I weren't running clean out of souvenirs," he said. "Say, Flax, how about getting the powder taken out and then loosening up and handing Phil and Myra each one of Fatso's cartridges?"

The party was almost over, and now the General was in a reminiscent mood. He was telling another one of his stories.

"The blast lifted us right off the seat of that jeep," I heard him saying, "and then we landed on it again hard, and Goochy began to swear.

"What's the matter, Gooch?" I said. "Did you pick up one of the pieces?" You see, it was an HE shell and a lot of metal was flying around.

"No," he said, and he looked as though he wanted to cry, "but

I sat down on that pint.' It was that pint of bourbon in his hip pocket. "Well, you should have seen Goochy doing his work that evening. He had to write his orders lying down flat while the medics were taking pieces of glass out of him."

Colonel Flax and I were standing a few steps away from the portable bar. We both joined in the merriment.

"I think this has all been good," the colonel said to me. "Don't you think the General handled himself all right?"

"I think Mel did a swell public-relations job," I told him.

The colonel lowered his voice discreetly. "Frankly," he said, "I had my fingers crossed once or twice. The General is the type that's hard to put over, public-relations-wise. You never know how the combat type is going to jump. The rough-and-tumble ones are never public-relations-conscious. Take Patton."

"Well, he was the greatest figure in the war," I said.

"I didn't say he wasn't," Colonel Flax answered, "but, oh brother — whenever he made a speech! Somebody is always pulling the carpet out from under combat generals." He glanced at Melville Goodwin. "They have to put over their personality to a lot of 20-year-old kids. They have to tell themselves they're good about a hundred times a day. They've got to hold that thought or else they'll crack. Look at Goodwin. He looks pretty good, doesn't he?"

Now that he had mentioned it, I had never seen Mel Goodwin looking better.

"Hey, Sid," the General called, "come over here. I've been asking Helen the name of your tailor, and she can't remember."

"What do you want a tailor for?" I asked.

"That tweed jacket and slacks of yours," Mel Goodwin said. "I need something to wear on Sundays. The war's over."

There was something preposterous in the idea of Melville Goodwin dressed in a tweed coat and slacks. I wondered what Dottie Peale would say if she saw him. Half of him would be gone and he did not know it.

"Well, what's so funny about it?" Mel Goodwin asked. He could read my thoughts correctly at the most unexpected times. "All you people on the outside seem to have queer notions about officers in civvies. There's nothing more satisfying to an Army man, after a hard day, than getting out of uniform into some everyday clothes. It's like taking off your corset and scratching—excuse me, Helen, my dear. . . . I've really got to get some civvies."

He stopped. Civilian clothes had reminded him of something else. "Say, Flax," he said, "don't forget those orchids for Mrs. Goodwin, will you?"

"No, sir," said Colonel Flax, and then the General laughed.

"Look at old Flax," he said. "I've run him ragged, haven't I? Don't worry; it's over, son."

WHEN THE dust of events had settled, Mel Goodwin told me quite a lot about that looked-forward-to evening he had spent with Dottie Peale.

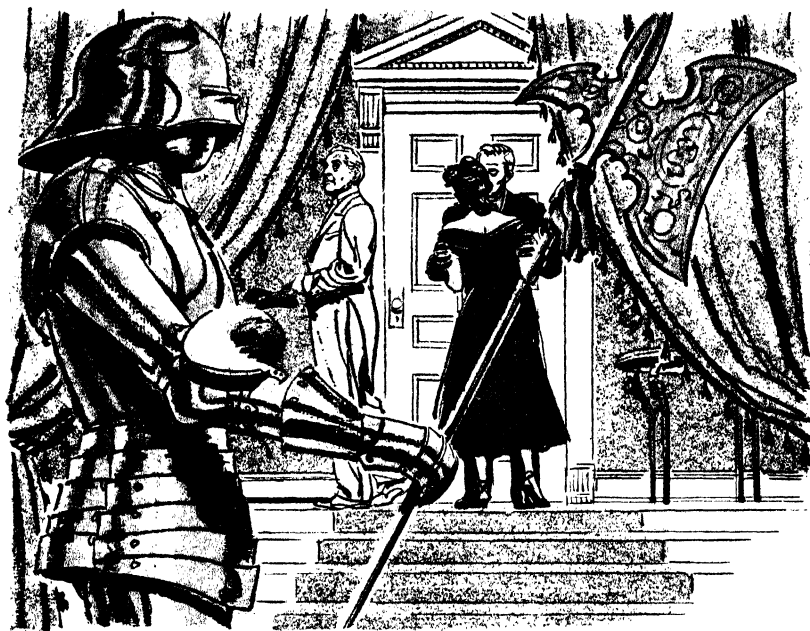
I had described Dottie's house to him vaguely, but he thought that I had been exaggerating until he saw it, and he found himself making a whole new evaluation of everything. Dottie was waiting for him in the salon, a large room with a travertine marble fireplace and Italian chairs and tapestries. She held out both her hands to him and turned her cheek for him to kiss it. It was half formal and half informal. He did not know exactly what the technique should be, since the butler was there.

"Oh, Mel," she said, "it's been ages. . . . Albert, would you tell Bernard to bring around the car?"

"What's the car for?" Mel Goodwin asked, as the butler left.

"You don't mind if I show you off a little, do you, darling?" she said. "Only cocktails at '21' and then a quick dinner at the Stork and then we'll come back home."

He was glad that he had thought to bring some cash with him. "It sounds all right to me," he said.



She looked up at him. "I had completely forgotten you were so handsome," she said.

"Why didn't you answer any of my letters, Dot?" he asked her.

"Because I never dreamed that anything could ever be the way it was," she said.

"Well, it is the way it was," he said.

"Darling," she said, "let's both be surprised for a minute, shall we?"

"All right," he said, "that isn't such a bad idea."

He had thought of her a great deal, but he had forgotten what he called her resilience and her loveliness. Of course, she was dressed for the occasion, but if she had been dressed in coveralls they would have been becoming. Her gown was made of plum-colored taffeta that was tight on top with a long billowing skirt that rustled, and every fold and flounce of it fell into formation.

"Darling," she said, "I'd almost forgotten how nice it is to see a

real man again." She pointed to a record player that was finished like the Italian furniture. "Turn on that thing over there, will you? I was playing it this afternoon."

When he pressed the switch down the music was that old waltz from *The Chocolate Soldier*.

"Aren't you going to give me some of this dance," she asked, "My Hero?"

"Don't kid me, Dot," he said when he put his arm around her.

"My Hero" was still playing when Albert handed him his gloves and cap.

MEL GOODWIN had never seen much of New York high life on an Army officer's pay. He had been to "21" once on a big blowout two days before he had sailed with "Torch," but he had never dreamed of going to the bar there with anyone like Dottie Peale and he had never dreamed that people would know who he was when she introduced him. It was all like something in the movies.

He seemed to have known Dottie always by the time they were half through dinner. She was interested in everything he said, not that he could remember clearly what they talked about, except that most of the conversation was about the relationship between men and women and what made such relationships successful.

"You know," he remembered that she said, "every woman wants to make a man happy. That's all she ever wants."

Somehow she brought back to his mind all sorts of things he had forgotten — things about the Point and about when he was a kid — and then they began remembering Paris.

"It was all just something off the map, Dot," he said.

"Mel, dear," she said, "do you think we're off the map now?"

"Yes," he said, "because it can't last, Dot."

"Why can't it?" she asked.

"Why, look at you," he said, "and look at me."

"It might," she said. "I'm looking."

When the waiter brought the check, he brought a pencil with him, and naturally he placed them before Mel Goodwin.

"Hand it over and let me sign it. It's my party," Dottie said. "There used to be a song about it, didn't there? — 'When the waiter came, she simply signed her name; that's the kind of a baby for me.'"

The future must have hung in the balance.

"Not my kind of baby, Dot," Mel Goodwin said.

The strange part of it was that she seemed surprised, which rather offended him until suddenly she looked wistful.

"Damn it," Dottie said, "it's awfully nice to feel helpless again." And then she said one final thing.

"Why can't things be like this always?"

Circe must have said it, and Cleopatra undoubtedly said it to Anthony, if not to Julius Caesar.

CHAPTER 25

There Could Always Be a Palace Revolution

AFTER Melville Goodwin left for New York I believed that he had gone more or less for good. I had no way of knowing that Mel Goodwin's life and mine were each moving to an almost simultaneous crisis. I could only see long afterward that coming events had cast their shadows during those days at Savin Hill. The General's interest in Dottie was, of course, a recognizable shadow, and I should have known that Gilbert Frary's oblique talk with me at Savin Hill, and the orchids for Helen were dangerous portents; but I had not been paying enough attention to my own affairs.

As I told Helen, I had professional pride, such as it was. I had never expected to be a radio commentator, but now that I was

one, I wanted to be a good one. I was tired of being only a front and a piece of property. I should have seen earlier that Art Hertz and everyone else on the program knew something that I did not. At the time I was exhilarated by a sense that I was beginning to pull more of my own weight in the boat and that things in the studio were going pretty well. I was finally getting the feeling of writing for the air, and a welcome aspect of the situation was the fact that Gilbert Frary had left for the West Coast without asking me to accompany him. With Gilbert away I was not quite the Charlie McCarthy I had been.

One day in the latter part of October at four in the afternoon I was sitting in my elaborate office, when suddenly the door opened, and a tall, youngish man, whom I did not know, peered in. This would not have happened if Miss Maynard, my secretary, had been at her desk but she had just come in to me with some teletype copy.

Strangers were not supposed to pop in at the studio and I had never seen this youngish man around, but something in the careful cut of his double-breasted suit and in the neat fold of the handkerchief protruding from his breast pocket gave me an idea that he knew his way about studios.

"Oh," he said, and he had a fine sincere voice that reminded me of my own when I heard a broadcast played back to me, "excuse me. I didn't know anyone was here," and then he was gone.

"Who was that?" I asked Miss Maynard, and I thought Miss Maynard colored slightly.

"Why, don't you know him, Mr. Skelton?" Miss Maynard asked.

I should have known right then that Miss Maynard knew something that I did not.

"Why," Miss Maynard said, "it's Mr. Alan Featherbee. You know, he has the nine-o'clock-in-the-morning spot at Acme, the one that's called 'Alan Featherbee and the News.'"

I remembered that Gilbert Frary had mentioned that Featherbee was the one who spoke his own commercials.

"Well, what's he doing here?" I asked.

"I really don't know, Mr. Skelton," Miss Maynard said. It seemed to me that she was speaking especially carefully and sweetly. "Mr. Featherbee has been around here a good deal during the last few days. Just visiting, I suppose."

Just then, the door was opened again by one of those nice boys in the uniforms with all the braid.

"Forgive me, Mr. Skelton," he said. "A gentleman at the reception desk would like to see you personally, and your secretary's telephone did not answer. A Captain Robert Goodwin, sir."

ROBERT GOODWIN was taller than his father, yet he looked very much as Mel Goodwin must have looked when he was fresh from the Point. He had the same crew cut and the same way of sitting, relaxed and yet not relaxed.

"It was nice seeing your father," I said after a little polite conversation. "I suppose he's right in the groove now and settling down in Washington."

Captain Goodwin looked straight at me.

"I wouldn't say the boss was quite settled down yet, sir," he said. "He and Mother are still sort of camping out with some old friends in Alexandria, Colonel and Mrs. Joyce. Maybe you've noticed, sir, or maybe it's only my own impression, that the old man is sort of restless."

In the Army you took more things for granted than you ever could on the outside. Now and then you had to put all the cards on the table with someone after a few minutes' acquaintance and you got to know and trust people quickly.

"Maybe I'd better lay it on the line," Robert Goodwin said. "You know, I've seen a lot of generals, because I was Priestley's aide for a while on Saipan. Do you know when I looked my father over the other day in Washington, I was surprised?" He stopped

and lit a cigarette. "I have a hunch he can handle anything right through a four-star job."

As I waited for him to go on, I thought he might be right. Somehow Goodwin was always better than you thought he was going to be, and he was still young as generals went.

"A lot of officers can only push beyond a certain level," the captain was saying, and he moved his hands in a quick gesture to indicate a level. "The boss has really got a future if he doesn't stick his neck out."

He glanced at me, but I did not answer.

"There's nothing in this world quite so naked as a general," Robert Goodwin said. "He's up there where everybody can see everything about him including his private life. The old man's up there just now, and they're looking him over. Every one of them has his own crowd behind him. . . . All right, I'm naturally in the Goodwin crowd" — Robert Goodwin glanced straight at me again — "and I don't want to see him fall flat on his face, Mr. Skelton."

"What makes you think he's going to fall on his face?" I asked.

It was a useless question, and we both knew it.

"Listen," he said, "what about this dame he keeps seeing in New York?"

It was news to me that the General had seen Dottie Peale more than that once in New York.

"Keeps seeing?" I repeated.

"That's right, sir," Robert Goodwin said. "He's commuting up here all the time from Washington."

"How do you happen to know about this?" I asked him.

His lips twisted into a mirthless smile. "I wouldn't say the old man was exactly a subtle character, would you, sir?" he said. "He's talked to me about the dame. He says you introduced her to him in Paris."

It seemed to me that he was implying that, because of an introduction, I was the one who should do something about it.

"Everybody's beginning to talk," he said. "They've been seen around."

"Now, look," I began, "these things happen sometimes."

"Yes, sir, you're damn well right they do," he answered, "but they ought not to happen to the old man right now."

"Have you tried speaking to your father?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I brought it up last night and it only made the old man mad. Have you ever tried to argue with him?"

"Yes," I said, "I've tried."

We sat in silence for a while, both supporting a Leaning Tower of Pisa—the career of Major General Melville A. Goodwin.

"Well," he said, "somebody's got to do something. What about this Mrs. Peale? Maybe she doesn't realize how this sort of thing might hurt him, from the service point of view. Maybe she doesn't know that the old man's slated for something big just now. I think I ought to meet her and have a talk with her myself."

It was exactly what someone of his age would have concluded, and the worst of it was I knew that Dottie would love to see young Robert Goodwin and that anything he might say would only give Mel Goodwin a new value.

"All right," I said, "then you'd better talk to her."

"Sir, would you consider going with me?" he asked.

"I think she'd like it better," I answered, "if you went alone."

AFTER Captain Robert Goodwin had left, my thoughts moved like a modern statesman's, in all directions, facing a half dozen unpleasant eventualities. Whenever I toyed with the idea of reaching Gilbert Frary on the Coast and asking him a few curt questions about this Alan Featherbee, who had popped so suddenly into the office, along came the shade of Melville Goodwin in Washington, struggling with his own uncertainties. I was reminded that before long I would be going down to Washington myself to give the broadcast there, thus creating the customary illusion that I was in close touch with the nation's capital. The

details had all been carefully arranged some six weeks before.

Before I was aware of the time, Art Hertz came in with the final script. It seemed to me that Art was more sure of himself and more aggressive than he had been a day or two before, as though he knew something. At any rate, it was 6:15, too late for any alterations in the script. While I was reading it, I felt that Art was watching me, though every time I looked up he was looking carefully at his hands or playing with a pencil.

"That's fine, Art," I said. "I always like what you do, but no two minds ever think exactly alike. You mustn't worry if I intersperse a few ideas sometimes."

"Oh, no," Art said, "that's all right. I always liked working for you, Sid."

At certain times you noticed small details. Art had used the past tense and the disturbing thing was that he noticed it, too.

"And I still like it, Sid," he said.

"Has Frary called up today?" I asked.

Art Hertz put his pencil in his pocket and smiled to show that we both understood all about Gilbert.

"Oh, yes," Art said, "he was on the telephone about half an hour ago. He was in a cabana at some swimming pool. He just wanted to hear the lead of the script."

"Did you tell him I was here?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," Art answered, "but when Miss Maynard said you were in conference, he just said give you his love."

"Oh, Miss Maynard was in your office when he called, was she?"

"She just dropped in," Art said. "You know Maynard; she's always around everywhere."

"That's right," I said, "everywhere."

I felt like a sultan in a palace, carefully guarded and yet aware of a palace revolution, and the feeling was all around me.

"You know we're going down to Washington on the 13th?"

"Yes," Art answered, "everything is set. By the way, it's going to be in Studio C this evening. I hope you don't mind, Sid."

· You noticed small details if you knew what was good for you. It was the first time I had ever broadcast from Studio C.

"No," I said, "I don't mind. I'd just as soon not have a crowd watching me."

I began thinking about my contract and I remembered how hurt Gilbert had been when I had shown it to a law firm Dottie Peale had selected. The contract was a long document which I had never read carefully, but I did remember a clause called a mutual-dissatisfaction clause, permitting a termination of the contract by either party. The clause was Number 28, and I wanted very much to read it just then. Instead, I got Dottie on the telephone, and arranged to stop by after the broadcast.

DOTTIE was in her study, on the sofa, her feet curled up under her. She wriggled off the sofa when she saw me.

"Hi, Dot," I said.

She held her hands out to me, but before I could take them she threw her arms around me and kissed me. It was utterly unexpected, but I could not say I minded it. "Darling," she said, "your feathers are all ruffled. You look upset."

As I stood with my arm around her, I had to admit that I felt happy, because I suddenly realized that she and I were friends in spite of all our quarrels. I knew that Dottie would not go back on me, and that it was safe to tell her anything that worried me.

"Darling," she said, "I'm ever so glad you called me up. Why not face it? It's nice to know you still belong to me a little."

"I don't mind it either right now," I said.

"If two people have ever been in love with each other," Dottie said, "they always do belong to each other a little. It isn't anything to be ashamed of . . . and now you'd better pull up your socks and tell me what's the matter."

"Well," I began, "this afternoon at the office . . ."

And there I was, telling Dottie Peale about Alan Featherbee and Gilbert Frary and Art Hertz.

"I don't want Helen disturbed," I said. "I suppose I ought to do something. What alarms me is that I don't seem to care."

"Damn it," Dottie said, "it's just like you, after you've made a success of something. Seriously, darling, haven't you known that Gilbert was out to knife you? I've known it for the last six weeks."

"How did you know?" I asked.

"Because I'm not a chump like you," Dottie said. "You've got to start pulling up your socks. You've got Helen and Camilla."

"I know," I said, "I've given that a little thought."

"There's plenty we can do about Frary," she said. "You're as important as Frary. What are you thinking of doing?"

"Frankly, I'm thinking of collecting my year's salary and getting out for good," I said.

"And then what'll you do?" she asked.

It was a pleasure to have her ask me instead of asking myself.

"I don't know," I answered. "Maybe I might do some writing."

"What sort of writing?" Dottie said. "Dog stories?"

"I've a poodle," I said. "I might do poodle stories."

"Oh, my Lord," Dottie said, and then she saw that I was laughing at her. "It's just the way it was on the paper. All right, I'll go around myself and see someone tomorrow."

"Well, that's fine," I said. "You sound exactly like Mrs. Melville A. Goodwin."

I saw Dottie's face redden and there was a moment's silence.

"Now, just why did you bring her up?" she asked, but we both realized that the Goodwins had been with us all the time.

"Now, Dottie," I said, "I didn't mean to, but how did you like the soldier boy?"

Dottie sighed impatiently. "First you come here," she said, "and tell me all your difficulties and then, when I'm considering them, you ask about something else. Don't you want me to help you?"

"Talking this over has been a help," I said, "but I don't want you to go and see someone."

"Sid," she said, "I don't know why you don't understand that

a woman's never happy unless she's useful to some man. Now, just the other night I was talking to Norman Jones, of White Wall Rubber. He was saying that they want to sponsor a news hour."

I could look into the future and see her talking to Norman Jones.

"I'm going to see him whether you want me to or not," Dottie said. "You never know what you want."

"Dottie," I asked her, "does anyone know what he wants?"

"That's a silly question," Dottie said. "I know. I don't flounder around like you."

"Well," I said, "you've never got it, have you?"

There is always something embarrassing about naked truth. She scowled at me and then she gave her head an impatient shake.

"That's right," she said, "but I'm still in there pitching, darling, and I don't just slide around."

Then I saw her move her head sharply and I heard the automatic elevator. She looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. It was exactly half past eight. "Darling," she whispered, "don't go yet."

CHAPTER 26

But Don't Quote the General Personally

WE HAD both turned to the door and there was Melville Goodwin. "Why, Mel," I heard Dottie say, "you're early."

"That's right," he said, "half an hour early. Hello, Sid."

"Sid came around for some advice, Mel," Dottie said. "Career trouble."

Mel Goodwin patted me on the shoulder.

"Career trouble?" he repeated. "Well, Sid can tell me all about it while you go in and put on what you call an evening frock."

Dottie and I are going to see the town. How about taking him along, Dot?"

Somehow we were in the middle of a family scene and I was the old and understanding family friend. "Mel," Dottie said, "would you mind very much if we all stayed here?"

Somehow this simple question gave the scene an even more domestic note. Mel Goodwin looked at her quickly.

"Why," he said, "what's the matter, Dot?"

"Oh," Dottie said, "nothing, Mel, except perhaps I've been thoughtless. I never dreamed that people would begin to talk."

Mel Goodwin clasped his hands behind him and glanced at me and back at Dottie, and the lines on his face looked deeper.

"Well, well," he said, "so that's why Sid's up here."

"No, no," Dottie said, "it isn't Sid. I've been thoughtless, Mel."

"Wait a minute now, let's get this straight," Mel Goodwin said. "You didn't feel this way when I called you up at noon. Someone's been working on you since then. Come on, who was it, Dot?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter, Mel," Dottie answered.

Mel Goodwin did not raise his voice.

"Come on," he said, "who was it, Dot?"

Dottie had finally found a man. I was sure that she did not want to tell and I was just as sure that she was going to.

"It's about time for me to be going home," I said.

"No," Mel Goodwin said, "I want you to stick around, boy. Who's been so interested in me, Dot?"

"Mel," Dottie said, "promise me you won't be mad at him. It was Robert."

"Well, I'll be damned!" the General said. "So Bob was here. It's nice, his being worried about the old man. You know, I kind of like it. Did you and Bob get along all right?"

Dottie smiled her warmest smile. "He was so sweet about you, Mel," she said.

"Well, well," the General said, "maybe Bob's right about being around publicly. Well, let's all stay here and have a happy

evening. I'm really glad you saw him. Did I ever tell you about the last time I had to lick him? It was when he swiped my horse at Schofield. He was too much horse and he ran away for about two miles, but Bob stayed with him. He told me later that I made his rear end sorer than the horse did." Melville smiled and sat down. "Fetch me a drink, will you, Sid? This is certainly a welcome change from Washington. That crowd in the Pentagon!"

Melville Goodwin's personality filled the room, embracing and absorbing Dottie Peale and me.

I forgot that it was time for me to be starting home. I was in an atmosphere of suspense, as I watched the two of them. It was fascinating, for instance, to observe that when he sat down on the sofa he unbuttoned two buttons of his blouse. When you thought of the buttons of West Point and of his subconscious preoccupation with appearance, nothing could have been more revealing. It told as clearly as words where Dottie and Mel Goodwin stood.

"How's Muriel?" Dottie asked.

"Oh," the General said, "Muriel's as busy as a bird dog. She's giving cocktail parties and we had a steak fry last night."

"Oh dear," Dottie said, "every time I see you, you seem to have just left some steak fry or other."

You might have thought that she had said something very profound, judging by the General's emphatic agreement.

"Ever since I was a shavetail," Mel Goodwin said, "there have been steak fries, but they're increasing lately. A lot of the big wheels seem to like chewing meat in somebody's back yard."

"Does General Bradley grill steaks, too?" Dottie asked.

"Oh," Mel Goodwin said, "Omar's good at anything."

"Did you see the President yesterday?" Dottie asked.

"I certainly did," Mel Goodwin said. "Muriel and I went there to tea and he gave me 15 minutes in the office. You really should have heard Muriel telling how I won the war."

"Well," I told him, "I think I ought to be going now."

"No, no," the General said, "sit down, Sid. You know what I

mean about Muriel. No one can set things up like Muriel."

"Don't go yet, Sid," Dottie said. "It's always fun when Mel gets started on Washington."

I would not have termed it all fun, but I was back again in the orbit of General Goodwin.

THIS WAS the second time, Mel Goodwin was saying, that he had come home from a war, but it was no joke coming home as a general, with a lot of missiles being thrown at you, including custard pies and bricks. There was all the Pacific island-hopping crowd trying to muscle in ahead of the Africa and ETO crowd. The truth was, combat officers were selling for about a dime a dozen, and you couldn't see the desks for the battle ribbons.

On his first day in Washington he had dropped in on the spur of the moment to see "Snip" Lewis, just for a friendly chat and some informal orientation. Snip had been in a key position since the war and as far as Mel Goodwin was concerned, he deserved everything he had. It was not Snip's fault that he had stayed on in Washington—somebody had to stay—and Snip had been a fine exec for Grimshaw. Nevertheless he was surprised when he dropped into that Pentagon office. Snip's office had a lot of mahogany in it and was about as big as the Chapel at the Point, with map racks and conference tables and his general's flag, but the thing that struck him right in the eye was Snip's exec in the outer office. It was old "Froggy" Jukes, sitting right out there pushing all the buttons.

He wanted to make it clear that he had nothing against Froggy. It wasn't any man's fault if he suffered from emotional instability and did not make the grade in a front area. Nevertheless when Froggy Jukes was in "Bullpup" in North Africa, he had been indecisive at a moment when you could not wait for second chances, and old Heinzy had not taken him over to Italy. Yet here he was, a brigadier, in the Pentagon with three secretaries and secret filing cabinets and four telephones.

"Well, well," Froggy said, "I've been wondering when you'd come here."

"Well, well," Mel Goodwin said, "it's nice to see you, Froggy. How have things been going?"

"I'm just the Chief's errand boy," Froggy said, "but I'm busy as a bird dog, what with all this unification. Let's see, you were in 'Bullpup,' weren't you, Mel?"

Froggy knew damned well that he was in "Bullpup."

"Heinzy never understood me out there," Froggy said.

All you could do was say that a lot of others hadn't hit it off with Heinzy either, but it was peculiar to hear someone like Froggy treating "Bullpup" as a joke and you could see that he still had it in for the "Bullpup" crowd on general principles.

"I suppose you want to hit the Chief for something," Froggy said. He was saying it in a kidding way, but it was time to put Froggy in his place.

"If General Lewis has about three minutes," Mel Goodwin said, "I'd like to pay him my respects."

"The Chief is pretty busy now," Froggy said. "It's a crowded morning, but I think he can give you five minutes."

"All right, ask him," Mel Goodwin said. "I'm pretty busy myself, Froggy."

Froggy opened the door to the inner office and slid through and closed it softly behind him. There was nothing about any of it that Melville Goodwin liked, particularly the implication that someone like Jukes could do him a favor. Of course Snip Lewis had time to see him.

"Sit down, Mel," Snip said. "I wish I didn't have to get out of here in five minutes."

"It's nice to see you, Snip," Mel said. "How's Ethel?"

"Ethel's fine," Snip said. "We'll have to get you and Muriel over on the first clear night, and we'll get the Old Man. The Old Man wants to see you."

"Well, that sounds good," Mel Goodwin said.

"I wish there were room for you on the team here," Snip said, "but a lot of people are going to be asking for you. If there's anything you'd like particularly, count on me to put in a word."

This was all said in a kidding way, of course, and Mel Goodwin laughed because it was the right thing to do and not because he felt like laughing. "Well," he said, "if you've got a division running around loose, bear me in mind, will you?"

This was said in a kidding way, too, but it was curious to see the blank look on Snip Lewis's face. You could see that he had always been away from divisions except on paper.

"Listen, Mel," he said. "We can cook you up something higher than that. Now you're safe home we don't want to send you out to Bragg or Bailey. What would you do with a division, boy?"

It was a funny sort of attitude. He wanted to ask Snip Lewis what he thought the Army was about, but it was no time to sound off too freely, and besides, Froggy had just re-entered the room.

"General Councillor is outside, sir," Froggy said, "and the car's at the Mall entrance."

"All right," Snip said, "two more minutes . . . and take my brief case," and they both watched Froggy close the door.

"Froggy has been quite a find," Snip Lewis said.

"I'm glad to hear it," Mel Goodwin answered. "I'd be damned if I'd want him." He could call a spade a spade with Snip. Snip laughed. "I know," he said, "but right now we need more brains than brawn. Just get it through your head that you've got brains, too. Goochy's here and a lot of your old crowd. We'll all get together. Take off the pressure, Mel, it's going to be all right."

But Mel Goodwin was not sure even then that everything was going to be all right. There were too many major generals wanting something. He was always running into them along the corridors, all calling on their own Snip Lewises. Maybe there should have been a displaced-persons' camp. There was nothing more displaced to his way of thinking than a combat general without troops in the Pentagon. I had never seen Melville Good-

win quite so frank. Then all at once he looked slightly guilty.

"This is all off the record, you know," he said. "I'm afraid I've been giving you a false picture of the Pentagon. Set it down to biliousness, will you?"

He was back with his loyalties again. He had given a false picture of the Pentagon and now he wanted to make it clear that there was the finest crowd of people there that had ever been in any Army—only there was so much fine material that it was a little crowded together, even in the Pentagon. They were doing the best they could there in the face of public apathy. He had been unduly hard on Froggy Jukes, too. Froggy really had a lot to recommend him.

He passed his hand over his closely cropped hair and unbuttoned the last button of his blouse.

"Why don't you take your coat off?" Dottie asked him.

I had never thought that I would be so much Melville Goodwin's partisan. I hated to think of his being disturbed in Washington. I did not want him to be vulnerable like other people.

"That's a good suggestion," he said, "but I wish you'd get in the habit of calling it a blouse instead of a coat."

He rose and took off his blouse and hung it neatly on the back of a chair. When he sat down again in his olive-drab shirt, I saw him gazing at his blouse. "It looks like part of my skin. Now, if Sid took off his coat, it wouldn't look so much like skin."

He smiled at us expectantly, but neither Dottie nor I spoke.

"Come to think of it, everything's on it, isn't it?" he said. "Maybe that's all that anybody ever sees in me—right over there. How would you like it if I left it off for good?"

"You look more comfortable without it," Dottie said.

"I feel more comfortable," Mel Goodwin said, "as long as you're around here, Dot."

He stood up and walked toward the chair where his blouse hung and walked around it slowly. "Now, when I was a kid at the Point," he said, "I often dreamed of ribbons. Maybe there comes

a time when you get too many. Maybe I've been a kid all my life and now I'm growing up."

"Mel," I said, "you'd better remember that you're too old to grow up."

For a moment he looked deadly serious and then he smiled his very youngest smile. "Son," he said, "that crack shows you know a lot about me and about the service. I'm too old to grow up but I can still feel myself growing. Now maybe you can tell me where it's taking me."

"I wouldn't know," I said.

He walked across the room to the window and stood with his back to us, looking out into the back yards.

"Something's got to give somewhere," he said. "That's right, isn't it, Dot? Something's got to give."

"Now, Mel," Dottie said, "don't worry about it now."

She must have been referring to something between them that they had often discussed before.

His mood changed. All the lines straightened on his face.

"Why haven't you stopped me sounding off about myself?" he asked. "You were saying that Sid had something on his mind." It was remarkable how quickly Melville Goodwin was back again and in control of the situation. I was very glad to unload my own troubles and to get away from his.

When I began telling how Gilbert Frary had discovered me, my story seemed painfully superficial. It was mostly an egocentric striving, punctuated by a few pallid efforts at escape. Once, I suppose, I had wanted to be a great writer or columnist, but the desire had never assumed the proportions of an emotional drive. All the time I talked I could feel what my life lacked in splendor. I had never been a selfless part of a cause. I had never tossed my life in front of me and followed it. I was not a Melville Goodwin.

"You see, Mel," Dottie said when I had explained my problems. "Sidney is always drifting. He never seems to care."

"I don't know," Mel Goodwin said. "Sitting in on this with a

purely outside point of view, it seems to me Sid's done pretty well, Dot. He's getting his facts and waiting to take action."

Gilbert Frary and the broadcasting studio had reached a military level, and Melville Goodwin's voice had a ring of complete authority. He had taken over my problem, and curiously enough I actually felt a weight being lifted from me.

"Mel," Dottie said, "make a note that I know a man who wants a news program."

"I'm not forgetting," Melville Goodwin said. "Get me a cigarette, will you, Dot?" and Dottie handed him the cigarette box and picked up the lighter as quickly as Colonel Flax.

"There was an officer at the St. George Hotel in African Headquarters in Algiers," the General said, "named Sturmer, a temporary brigadier like me. He was like this Frary, flexible and without loyalty. Did I ever tell you about Ed Sturmer, Dot?"

"No, I don't think so," Dottie said.

"Now this Ed Sturmer," Mel Goodwin said, "wanted to get my spot in 'Bullpup.' He was always telling me how he admired me, and then he was always finding little facts about me and getting in to see the Old Man when I wasn't there, and giving the little facts an unfavorable slant. Well, I let Ed run along with it until I was all ready for him."

Melville Goodwin rubbed his hands together. "I just waited until the Old Man had Ed and me alone with him there in the St. George," he said, "going over a map. I remember Ed was holding a pointer and arguing. I interrupted him right in the middle and spoke to the Old Man.

"'Sir,' I said, 'may I make a remark before General Sturmer finishes?'

"'Yes, what is it, Mel?' the Old Man said.

"'Heinzy,' I said, 'Ed is going to ask you, if he hasn't asked you already, whether he can't have my spot in "Bullpup." If you want him and not me, I'd suggest you make the decision, instead of letting us both horse around like kids at a cocktail party.'"

Melville Goodwin fixed his eyes on me. "There are times when you've got to stick your neck out," he said. "I was taking one hell of a gamble. Sturmer jumped so, he nearly dropped the pointer, but old Heinzy didn't say anything for a quarter of a minute.

"You're pretty impertinent, don't you think, Mel?" the Old Man said.

"Yes, sir, I think so," I told him.

"Well," he said, "there's no need for such shocking manners, Mel. Go on and consider there has been no interruption, Ed."

Melville Goodwin paused as though he had reached the end of the story. "But what *happened*?" Dottie asked.

"Damn it, Dot," Melville Goodwin said, "nothing happened. I was in 'Bullpup' until I got a piece of hardware in my shoulder, wasn't I? The point is, you've got to stick your neck out sometimes. Sid should get another job and then see this Frary."

"Did you have another job lined up in Algiers?" I asked.

"Listen, son," the General said. "I'm talking about you, not me. Three other people were asking for me, and Heinzy knew it. Now you'd better get back to Connecticut or Helen will pin your ears back. You have nothing further to worry about. Dot and I personally will handle your situation."

Dottie was smiling at him affectionately, and I knew that Melville Goodwin was right. It was time for me to be getting home.

"There's just one element that I'd like you to consider, sir," I said. "Suppose I'm sick to death of this broadcasting and that I'd welcome any opportunity to get out of it."

Melville Goodwin looked as though I had uttered a heresy. I noticed that he did not have to use his hands to propel himself upward from the cushions of the sofa.

"Now, Sid," he said, "now, Sid." He spoke in the gentle and fatherly voice that he probably used on subordinates whom he really liked. "You're bothered and tired, son, or you'd never have said a thing like that." Then his voice changed. There was a ring in it of absolute certainty. "Just take it easy, son. Of course, you're

not sick of what you're doing, because basically you have guts. You've got a fine position and look at that lovely home of yours in Connecticut."

I felt like a football player being addressed by the coach at the end of a ragged half.

"I'm going to tell you something, son," he went on. "Do you remember when that mortar shell rolled you and me into the ditch in Normandy? When we got up and exchanged a few words afterward, I knew I was talking to a man, even if you were only a 90-day wonder from Special Services. Do you know what I said to Goochy afterward? I said, 'Make a note of that officer's name. A lad like that ought to be in the line. It's too bad to think of his fooling around somewhere in back.'"

Mel Goodwin waited, and I cleared my throat. "It's kind of you to tell me that, sir," I said. "It means a lot, coming from you."

And somehow it did mean a lot.

"Forget it, son," he said. "You've got guts and you've got your directive, too. Never neglect a directive. You've a lovely wife and a beautiful little girl, and you're not going to let them down. Now, go on home and leave this to Dot and me. Good night, son."

I should have been striving to remember Clause 28 in my contract instead of feeling a deep concern for Melville Goodwin. A part of that concern was undoubtedly a hang-over from the war. You had to be loyal in the Army, and whether I liked it or not, I was loyal to Melville Goodwin. He was both an individual and a symbol and he had to do what I expected of him. He must not be a failure.

I was sure that Mel Goodwin and Dottie Peale could not have anything in common that would last for any length of time. Yet there had been some sort of understanding between them. I remembered his saying that something had to give somewhere. . . . "That's right, isn't it, Dot? Something's got to give."

CHAPTER 27

It Was a Lot of Fun with Gooch

IT HAD been Gilbert Frary's pet idea to move the broadcast about the country. If I started a broadcast by saying, "Good evening, friends. I am speaking to you from Washington tonight" — or London or Paris — the listeners might think of me as Sid Skelton, the news hawk, ferreting out his own facts after confidential talks with heads of governments, instead of getting them off the teletype and having Art Hertz prepare them.

Though Gilbert was still out in Hollywood, he had perfected all the arrangements for a Washington broadcast by remote control. I was to be in Washington, ostensibly looking into the Chinese situation, and somehow Gilbert had contrived to get a State Department man named Hubert Stillwater for a three-minute spot.

"I just happen to be sitting," I was to say, "with my old friend, Hubert Stillwater, one of our State Department's 'think men.' We have been discussing the implications of Chinese Communism, and perhaps Mr. Stillwater would not mind repeating what he has just been telling me. How about it, Hubert?"

I HAD spent long periods of time in Washington when I had been on the paper. In those days I rented a room on B Street, NE, in order to be near the Capitol. Things were different now. I was lodged in one of those diplomatic suites at the Hotel Mayflower, all done in Empire and damask. We did not need the entire suite, because Gilbert would not be there, but still, there was the entourage. There was Sammy Kahn, who traveled with the show to

handle transportation and broadcasting arrangements. There was Miss Maynard, who answered the telephone and helped Sammy more than she ever helped me. Then there was Art Hertz and Miss Olson, his secretary, and one of the boy ushers named Jimmy, who handled bags and typewriters.

The suite and the entourage were all there ready and waiting for me, when I arrived from New York at 11 in the morning, but there was a perfunctory quality in everyone's attitude toward me which was even more noticeable than it had been in New York. Sammy naturally gave me the largest room, but he did not buzz around as he had formerly. Art Hertz was in the adjoining room, and I noticed that Jimmy, who was unpacking his bags, did not leave them to take care of mine.

"Art," I called, "is your room all right?"

Art entered my room in his shirt sleeves. "Everything's swell," he said. "I've begun on a first draft — without waiting for you."

There was nothing to criticize in the way he said it except that his manner was unduly positive.

"Go right ahead," I told him. "I won't bother you with any thoughts today."

"I didn't mean it that way, Sid," Art said.

"Neither did I," I told him. I smiled my sincerest smile.

"I don't know what's troubling you, Sid," Art began, "but if I've done anything you don't like, I wish you'd specify."

"Don't you ever get depressed, Art?" I asked. "I'm only undergoing a mild fit of depression, that's all. Don't worry about me. I'll get over it."

I smiled my sincerest smile again and walked into the sitting room and called Miss Maynard. Dottie Peale had taken over as she had said she would, and I had seen my lawyers and Dottie's friend in White Wall Rubber. It was time to put my cards into order according to suit and value.

"Miss Maynard," I said, "will you get me Mr. George Burtheimer in Chicago, please?"

I said it loudly enough so that Art could not miss hearing it. "Say, Sid," he said, "you know how Gilbert feels about anyone else talking to Burtheimer."

"That's all right," I said. "I'm feeling lonely," and I observed that both Miss Maynard and Art looked flustered.

"But there isn't anything to bother him about," Art said.

"Now, Art," I said, "I won't bother him."

I only had time to sit down and smoke half a cigarette before Mr. Burtheimer was on the line, and by then all the connecting doors of the suite were open and everyone was listening.

"Hello, George," I said. "I'm here in Washington and I'm feeling lonely."

Then I asked him what he was doing for breakfast the next morning. I told him that I could take a night plane to Chicago. Then I asked Miss Maynard to see about a reservation.

I had been thinking over this plan for several days, and I was gratified by the general reaction. "Say, Sid," Art said, "have you told Gilbert anything about this?"

"Why, no, Art," I said. "The impulse just came over me," but I was sure that Gilbert Frary would hear about it very soon.

When it came to office infighting, offense was always preferable to defense, and clearly no one had expected a definite step like this. There was no need to embarrass Art Hertz by staying in the suite for the next few hours, and I thought of Melville Goodwin. I had the Goodwins' number in Alexandria.

Muriel Goodwin's voice had a clear, executive assurance, surprisingly like that in the voice of Dottie Peale. Both voices had the same contagious warmth and enthusiasm.

"Now, let's see," she said. "We must make plans. Mel will be furious if he doesn't see you right away. He's at the Pentagon. I'll have him call you. What are you doing after the broadcast?"

I told her I was taking a night plane to Chicago.

"We'll take you to the airport," she said. "We're having a steak fry in the back yard tonight. . . . It won't be any trouble at all."

"That sounds wonderful," I heard myself saying.

No people in the world were more hospitable than service people. All I had to do was wait until I had heard from Mel.

I did not have to wait more than a few minutes, either, before the telephone rang. Muriel Goodwin had set the wheels in motion, and the Army was in control. General Goodwin was at a meeting which he could not leave, but the General was looking forward to seeing me the moment he was free. A car from Public Relations would call for me at once.

A CAPTAIN RATTISBONE from Public Relations took me into the outer room of a suite of offices in the Pentagon. Having led me past a row of empty leather-upholstered chairs, his hand dropped tentatively on the knob of a closed door. He pushed the door cautiously, ready to close it discreetly if it were an unpropitious moment. Everything must have been all right inside because he turned his head toward me, nodded and opened the door wide.

"Will the General see Mr. Skelton now?" he asked.

"Hell, yes," I heard him say. "Don't keep him waiting outside."

"You can go right in, sir," Captain Rattisbone said, and he walked behind me as though I might turn and escape.

I was in a fine room carpeted in crimson. A massive mahogany desk stood in front of three broad windows that looked out over the Potomac. There was the inevitable leather couch and the heavy chairs that one seldom used and the lighter ones which could be arranged in hasty groups around the desk. An oil portrait of a soldier in a chokingly high-necked uniform hung upon the wall. Melville Goodwin was standing near the desk with the cold light from the windows upon him. He was in his "A" uniform and he looked very well.

"Well, well, Sid," he said. "So you got him, did you, Captain? Did he come without making trouble?"

Captain Rattisbone laughed appreciatively.

"There wasn't any fuss, sir," he said.

Melville Goodwin smiled. "You know, Sid," he said, "you can send this Rattisbone for anything, and he always gets it." He smiled at the captain graciously. "And he's been very kind to the old man. Just a minute now, Captain. We're frying steaks at home tonight. Why don't you and Mrs. Rattisbone come over if you haven't anything else to do?"

"Thank you very much, sir," the captain said.

"And when you go out, see if you can find General Gooch and tell him Mr. Skelton's here, and it's time for lunch."

"Yes, sir," the captain said. The door closed noiselessly.

"It's nice to see you, Sid," Melville Goodwin said. "I was just telling Goochy this morning that he can have this whole place if he wants it, even this portrait here." He nodded in a friendly way toward the picture on the wall. "Do you know who that's a picture of?"

"No," I answered, "unless it's Zachary Taylor."

"No, no, no," Melville Goodwin said. "You ought to bone up on your history, Sid. It's General Winfield Scott — old 'Fuss and Feathers.'"

"Oh," I said, "well, it's quite a picture."

"Goochy snaked it out of the Secretary's office," the General said. "Goochy had the choice of that or the Peach Orchard at Gettysburg. He picked Scott. He says it's more inspirational."

Melville Goodwin cleared his throat. "I've been in two meetings this morning," he said, "or I'd have gone over to get you myself. They're going to decide what to do with me any day now. It's been sort of tense here this morning. Muriel was pretty tense this morning, too. I wonder whether she knows something I don't." I began to feel tense myself.

"Mel," I said, "has anything happened to you?"

"What makes you think so, son?" he asked.

"Because I think you're pretty wound up this morning," I said.

I could see him thinking it over. "Right," he said, "you're right on that one, son."

He walked over to the windows behind the desk and stared out at the river. Then he walked back to where I was standing.

"I've been going through quite a lot lately, emotionally, I mean. I can handle it, but at the same time. . . Do you ever get hunches, son?"

"Yes," I said, "occasionally."

"Well, it isn't a bad idea to respect them," he said. "I've noticed the further along a man gets, the more he's got to live with himself and with a few hunches that come to him out of the air. This is up pretty close to the throne, a lot too close for comfort, and the air is pretty rarefied, but hunches are hunches anywhere. Right now I feel the way I felt at Maule when no information was coming in. There's something inside me that keeps talking from my guts. Something is saying, 'Listen, Mel, you're going to get it one way or the other. Be ready to take it, Mel.'"

I was so completely captured by his stark eloquence that I was bracing myself for whatever it was that was coming.

"The dice are coming out of the box, son," he said. "I'm either going to get patted on the head or get kicked in the pants."

He rubbed his hand over the back of his closely cropped head. It was one of his few indecisive gestures.

"Have you seen Dottie lately?" he asked.

"No," I answered, "not since that night."

"I haven't either," he said. "Perhaps it's just as well." He stopped, seeming to hope that I would make some answer that would be reassuring. "It's funny," he said slowly, "how many times I've had to lecture other officers on woman trouble and now I don't seem to have the build to handle it myself. New York's too close to Washington."

"Doesn't it occur to you that this is only a phase?" I began. "Nearly everyone goes through something like this sometime."

Melville Goodwin nodded and he stared at the floor as though it were a map. "Yes, I know," he said. "I don't know whether it's a phase or not. The trouble is, I love her."

If he had only said it with more emotion, it would have been easier to discount. Instead he made the statement sound inescapable.

"All right," I said, "but do you think she loves you?"

"I wouldn't know," he said. "She says so, and I hope she does."

The door opened just as Melville Goodwin finished speaking, and Dottie Peale was snapped away into the compartment reserved for his top secrets. The whole office became bare and impersonal. "Hello, Goochy," Mel Goodwin said, "I want you to meet my friend, Sid Skelton, General Gooch."

As soon as I saw General Gooch, I realized that his Army nickname, "Long John" Gooch, was one of those heavily humorous Army efforts. He would have been in the shortest squad at the Point.

Small Army men always looked tougher than their larger counterparts. General Gooch's face was leathery and hard, and even his smile had a sour tinge that fitted the rasp in his voice.

"Glad to meet you, sir," he said.

He did not look glad to meet me. He made me feel as though I were an unfortunate weakness of General Goodwin's.

"Let's get lunch, Goochy," Mel said.

"Where do you want to go, sir?" General Gooch asked.

Melville Goodwin spoke with a sort of artificial carelessness. "We're going to have lunch in the Secretary's Mess."

"Why not the General and Flag Officers' Mess, where boys can be boys?"

Melville Goodwin laughed merrily. "Goochy always swallows the wrong way when he sees civilian Secretaries," he said. "It's all right, Goochy. I told Snip that Sid here is a VIP; I want him to see the top brass. Come on, Goochy."

I had never been to the Secretary's Mess, and judging from General Gooch's hesitation, he seemed to doubt whether I was up to it. "I don't know whether we can get a small table, sir," he said.

"Then we can sit anywhere," the General said. "Maybe 'Sunny' Minturn will be there."

General Gooch glanced at his wrist watch, and then his beady eyes met General Goodwin's wordlessly. I did not know who Minturn was but his name appeared to convey something.

"I have a hunch Sunny may have some news for me," the General said. He gave a pull at his blouse, although it did not need straightening. "Well, what are we waiting for?" he said. "Come on, Goochy."

I followed Melville Goodwin through the outer office and out to the corridor with General Gooch walking close behind us.

"You know, this eating place is really something, Sid," Mel said. "Sometimes when I see it I wonder who let me in."

I followed him into the Secretary's dining room and for the first time in a long while I felt shy and callow. That decorous clublike dining room was a suitable setting for the climax of careers. It was a room in which to sit up straight and to speak in a modulated tone. In fact, I found it difficult to speak at all. It seemed to me that everyone whose picture I had ever seen was there, except MacArthur, who was still in Japan.

Melville Goodwin cleared his throat, and spoke to a Filipino petty officer who stood by the door. "May we occupy that small table over there, Chief?" he asked.

"Certainly, sir," the Filipino said.

"Thank you, Chief," the General said. "Come along, Sid."

I was impressed by the poise of Melville Goodwin as I followed him. He did not walk too fast or too slowly. He smiled and nodded to officers who looked up at him, graciously or deferentially, according to their rank.

We seemed to have walked a long way to reach the table. "Sit over there, Sid," the General said, "where you can see the show. There's Sunny Minturn over there," he added. "Who's he sitting with, Goochy?"

"He's with General Candee, sir."

"Butch Candee?" the General said. "Where's Butch been keeping himself? I've never seen him around here."

"He's in from Japan, I think, sir," General Gooch answered.

"Yes, it's Butch all right," Melville Goodwin said. "It's been ten years since I've seen old Butch. . . . It looks like a roast beef day. The beef's good here."

"Coffee with the meal, sir?" the mess attendant asked, but the General wanted coffee later.

"Gooch," the General said, "how about telling Sid about the time that you were with Jenks in that jeep?"

"You tell it, Mel," General Gooch said, and he smiled at me painfully. "I don't know why the General likes that story."

"You see, it was this way, Sid," the General said. "Goochy was riding in this jeep. A captain was driving him, named Jenks. Do you know where Jenks is now, Goochy?"

"He's home," Gooch said, "practicing law in Atlanta."

"I wouldn't have thought Jenks was a lawyer on the outside," Melville Goodwin said. "Well, anyway, Goochy was out riding with Jenks around Metz. I don't know why. They skidded off the road and they turned a somersault in the air and landed right side up in the middle of a brook, and do you know what Goochy said? He just said, 'That's what I call service, Jenks, but after this we'd better walk.'"

General Gooch smiled in a tortured way.

"I don't know why the General likes that story, Mr. Skelton," he said. "There really isn't any point to it."

General Goodwin laughed. "You're the point, Goochy," he said, "but maybe we'd better not tell any more jokes in here." He nodded genially to a friend across the room. "I always have a lot of fun when I'm with Gooch."

I could see why General Gooch might have been a good, efficient chief of staff, but I could not see why Melville Goodwin always had fun with him. I could only perceive that they were devoted to each other.



We finished the roast beef and worked on some ice cream. Throughout the Secretary's dining room luncheon was nearly over. I saw General Minturn, with his three stars, looking at us across the room, and Butch Candee, with his one star. A tall bean pole of a major general with a prominent Adam's apple walked toward us and halted at our table, smiling. General Gooch sprang hastily out of his chair, but Melville Goodwin remained seated for an appreciable moment. Then he, too, stood up.

"Hello, Snip," he said. "Sit down and join us, won't you? This is my friend, Sidney Skelton, I was telling you about. Major

Skelton—General Lewis. We're about to have some coffee."

I saw at once why General Lewis had been nicknamed "Snip"—another vestige of humor from the Point, when Cadet Lewis had stood tallest in the tallest squad.

"It's a real pleasure to have you here with us, Mr. Skelton," General Lewis said. "I'm sorry the Secretary isn't here today—but *perhaps some other time.*"

"Sit down, won't you, Snip?" Melville Goodwin asked again.

General Lewis smiled and shook his head, but even that brief gesture conveyed ease and charm of manner. I could place him right away as just the sort of person who would be selected to accompany a chief on an overseas mission.

"I wish I could," he said, "but I'm due at a meeting in five minutes." He smiled at me confidentially. "Unification. Mr. Skelton probably knows we're unification-conscious around here now. Mel, has Sunny Minturn seen you yet?"

Melville Goodwin's glance traveled across the room and back to General Lewis. He looked innocent, but General Gooch did not have his skill. Every line of his concave face was intent.

"How do you mean, has he seen me yet?" There was just the slightest emphasis when Melville Goodwin spoke the word "yet." We were all watching General Lewis, who had the concerned expression of someone who had said too much.

"You would think, wouldn't you, that I'd know enough not to let cats out of bags by now," he said, and then the full charm of his smile was turned on Melville Goodwin. "Anyway, it makes me the first to congratulate you, Mel. Step over here for a second with me, will you? Will you excuse us, Mr. Skelton, if two bad boys do a little talking out of school?"

He had his arm through Melville Goodwin's, and they moved slowly toward the entry, speaking softly, with inclined heads. A moment or two later I saw them shaking hands, and I heard General Goodwin say, "Thanks, I'll see you later, Snip." The tension and the waiting were over. The ghost had walked. The

decision for Mel Goodwin's professional future must have been made that morning. The palms of my hands were moist. I was right in there praying for Melville Goodwin.

Then he was walking back to us.

"Well, Goochy," he said, and his voice was hoarse.

"Come on — what's the score?" General Gooch asked.

Mel Goodwin smoothed the furrows on his forehead and policed the lines of his mouth. He sat down slowly.

"Merriwell's asked for me."

I saw General Gooch's face light up.

"Boy," he said, "it's Plans!" I could feel the depth of his pleasure and relief. "See if you can get me over with you, will you?"

Melville Goodwin rolled his napkin into a neat cylinder and dropped it in front of him. "Goochy," he said, "it's more than I deserve. I know I ought to jump at it — but . . ."

"Say, Mel," General Gooch said, "how about coming to my office? We can scare up a cup of coffee there."

Plans and planning had always been breathless words for me when I was a PRO. Plans was the brains of the Army. You knew everything there was to know if you were in there. It was the secret circle of the elite. I could see Melville Goodwin on his way to another star. I could see him in a larger and more spacious office and I could hear the respectful voices and the muted footsteps of junior planners when they came to hand him papers. I could see him with his private motor on call day or night.

Back in the office, Goochy closed the door softly and decisively. When he locked it, for some reason rank dropped away.

"Listen, Mel," he said, "I haven't seen you this way since Maule. Sit down and get whatever's biting you off your chest. Nothing you say in here is going any further unless . . ." His beady black eyes bored into me, "unless it's Mr. Skelton."

"Damn it, Goochy!" Melville Goodwin said, and I had never heard him raise his voice before. He did not raise it much, but it sent a shiver down my spine. "Sid's all right."

"Well," Goochy said, "get it out of your system, boy. What's the matter with Plans?"

Melville Goodwin jabbed his hand viciously into the side pocket of his blouse and pulled out his cigarettes and his lighter. Then he jerked a cigarette from the pack and lighted it, with the same sort of one-two motion that an infantryman used on the bolt of his rifle at inspection.

"I don't know what's the matter with me, Goochy," he said, "that I don't jump at a good thing when it comes my way. I was in with the Chief half an hour yesterday. He didn't say a word about moving me into Plans. I want to know what soft-bottomed Fancy Dan fouled me up in this."

Mel Goodwin began pacing back and forth across the office. "I wonder how the wires got crossed," he said. "Do you know what I think? I think it's Muriel!"

General Gooch laughed rudely. "Horsefeathers," he said, but Melville Goodwin paid no attention.

"You know, this is just what Muriel wants," he said. "Me settle down in the Pentagon with Merriwell to ride me."

"Just what's the matter with Lieutenant General Merriwell? He was a good corps commander, wasn't he?"

Mel stopped his pacing. "He's a piddling old fool."

"They all are," Goochy answered, "but he's only got another year."

"I know," Mel Goodwin said, "and maybe I'll get another star out of it if I live right, but, good Lord — a year with 'Fuss' Merriwell!"

"Don't you know when you have it cushy?" Goochy said. "We can't buzz around forever — and we've had a lot of fun."

I had not known that General Gooch could speak so gently. His words seemed to make Mel Goodwin feel his age.

"Listen, Goochy," he said, "you and I aren't through just yet."

"I didn't say we were," Goochy answered. "You'll end up with a corps when you get out of Plans."

"I know I don't make sense," Mel Goodwin said, "but after paper-passing for two years in Frankfurt, I supposed I could be connected with troops in some way."

"Listen, Mel," Goochy said, "can't you ever get troops off your mind?"

Melville Goodwin moved toward the desk very slowly and ground his cigarette hard into an ash tray.

"I know what I'm meant for," he said, "and what I'm made for."

"You'll go where they send you, Mel," Goochy said.

Mel Goodwin smiled his most mechanical smile, but it concealed nothing. For once, I had seen the whole of Melville A. Goodwin, and I had to hand it to him. He did not want it soft.

"Will I?" he said. "Maybe . . . But I could retire."

There was a dead, queer silence.

"Say, Mel," General Gooch said very slowly, "has that little skirt in New York been getting to you again?"

It came so suddenly that I caught my breath.

"Never mind that now, Goochy," he said, and that peculiar silence was back with us.

"And at your age," General Gooch said. "Good Lord!"

"I wish you'd stop referring to my age," Mel Goodwin said. "I'm not in a wheel chair yet."

Then the telephone rang with a discreet, muted sound, and before the ring was over General Gooch was at the desk.

"General Gooch speaking," he was saying. Then he closed his wiry hand over the mouthpiece and nodded. "For you, Mel," he said. "The Chief's office calling."

Melville Goodwin snatched the telephone out of his hand.

"General Goodwin speaking," he was saying.

The rank was back. The world was moving again by the numbers. There was a sharp decisive click as General Gooch unlocked the office door.

"Yes, sir," General Goodwin was saying. "I'll be there directly,

sir." The telephone gave a little thump as he set it down again.

"That makes it official," he said. "I'd better say so long, Sid. I'll see you tonight. Wait for me, will you, Goochy?"

General Gooch smiled his sourest smile.

"Congratulations, Mel," he said, ". . . on everything!"

The sound of the wish was as acid as the smile that had gone before it, but Melville Goodwin was already out of hearing.

"Off the beam for a floosie . . ." General Gooch said. "And when he starts he always goes. Yes, sir, he always goes!"

CHAPTER 28

It Was Almost a Celebration

I WAS NOT without my private sources of information in the broadcasting business, and these all indicated that Gilbert Frary was definitely planning to throw me over. It was time to plan very carefully what I would say to George Burtheimer, in Chicago, and what I would say later to Gilbert Frary, for it was certain that Gilbert would fly east promptly. Yet again, the intrigues in which I was engaged seemed petty and insignificant. The dilemma of Melville Goodwin was larger and more tragic. I could see myself worrying along in some way, but it would be different with Melville Goodwin. I did not want to see him end in nothing.

All that afternoon and evening, I went through the motions of my own living, but I did not recall a single detail of the broadcast. I only remember that I wanted to know what was happening in Alexandria.

PEOPLE in the service seldom displayed much imagination about their home surroundings, perhaps because they could not

afford imagination. When my taxi stopped in front of the Joyces' house in Alexandria, I had seen the whole picture many times before. The house was in a uniform real estate development, one of those contractor-designed dwellings that had sprouted like mushrooms around Washington during the war years. The ever-green shrubbery around the brick front steps was all according to planned convention, as were the solid-green shutters with their cutout crescent moons and imitation wrought-iron fasteners.

It was about eight in the evening and rather cool for a steak fry, but in the small back yard a good many people were clustered around the outdoor grill, and there were more on the sun porch and in the living room, all eating slabs of steak — commissary steak — from plates upon their knees. Everyone was talking loudly and having a wonderful and half-off-the-record time.

No one noticed me immediately, and I was about to look for my host and hostess, when my eye lighted on Captain Rattisbone, who was sitting in a corner beside a frightened brown-eyed pregnant girl, who must have been Mrs. Rattisbone. When he saw me, he sprang up instantly.

"General and Mrs. Goodwin asked me to keep an eye out for you, sir," he said. "I'll tell the General, if you'll wait here. May I present you to Mrs. Rattisbone?"

Mrs. Rattisbone's hand was cold and damp. She smiled at me in a hasty stricken way. She was conscious of her condition and she was very, very junior. "It's a treat for Roy and me to be here," she said. "Isn't it a lovely party?"

It was not necessary to answer, because Captain Rattisbone had already returned with Melville Goodwin. It took a second for me to adjust myself to the General's appearance. He was out of uniform, and I had not prepared myself for it. Mediocrity had suddenly overtaken him. He looked like a plump, middle-aged nonentity, whom you might meet at a golf club and immediately forget. Of course, it was the cut of the clothes. The General wore a Harris tweed coat and gray slacks. After years of olive drab, he

had revolted against monotonous. The coat he had selected was russet brown, with a grid of violent green woven into the brown texture. Its lapels rose in points like the clipped ears of a bull terrier. It was belted in the back and full of pleats, and it had round buttons of green leather that looked like misplaced olives. His soft shirt was a rich blue. His tie was red with green diagonal stripes.

He may have read some of my thoughts, because he often had an unexpected insight. "So you got here, did you, Sid?" he said. "How do you think I look?"

"Like something off a Scottish moor," I told him.

"That's right," he said, and he appeared delighted. "It's Harris tweed, and you can smell it and it says so on the label." He stroked the coat affectionately.

"Well, first we'll take that suitcase of yours upstairs," he said. "Here, give it to me. I'm not in a wheel chair yet."

The Goodwins and the Joyces must have been completely congenial to have lived together in that small house, which was clearly designed for a single family.

"Here," Melville Goodwin said, pointing to the hall bedroom, "we can stick the suitcase in my dressing room."

It was really a spill-over room, with a denim-covered studio couch available at any moment for any unexpected guest, and Melville Goodwin's possessions there could have been moved out in five minutes. His brief case and his garrison cap, three volumes of Clausewitz and a Bible lay on a battered little table. His clothes were in the narrow wardrobe concealed by a blue denim curtain. His sense of home was as mobile as an Army column. He was perfectly content camping out with the Joyces.

"I know it isn't any of my business, Mel," I said, "but I can't help being curious about what happened this afternoon. Are you going to take that job or aren't you?"

He gave me his blankest, dullest stare.

"Listen, boy," he said, "in the Army, when the boss puts you

in a good spot, you don't argue. I'm waiting and thinking for the moment, son, and, you know, I've got quite a lot to think about."

"Have you explained your reactions to Muriel?" I said.

He rubbed his hand over the back of his head.

"Damn it," he said, "I started to, but she's so damn happy that I couldn't. Let's go downstairs and get a drink."

It should have been the end of a perfect day. No one could ever evaluate the reasons for another's discontent. Mel Goodwin belonged with that crowd downstairs. He would have been a fish out of water anywhere else, and I had to tell him so — no matter what the repercussion.

"Wait a minute," I said.

"What's the matter now?" he asked.

"Mel," I said, "don't you know you belong right here? What do you think you'll look like if you leave this for Dottie Peale?"

"Sid," he said, "what makes you think I'm going to?"

"Because I've been watching you," I said. "You've been thinking about it, haven't you?"

"Yes," he said, "I've been thinking."

"Well, think some more," I said. "Think what you have and what you'll lose."

Neither of us took his eyes from the other. Melville Goodwin drew a deep breath.

"Boy, it's funny," he said. "I ought to be mad as hell at you." Suddenly he clenched his fist, moved his hand upward slowly and tapped me gently on the chest. "There's just one thing I want straight from now on out. I don't need any more advice, son. You understand?"

"You won't get any more," I said, and we stood facing each other for another moment.

"Come on," he said, "let's go downstairs and get a drink."

"Just one thing more," I said, and I paused at the head of the stairs.

"Sid," he said, "I'm pretty well browned off right now."

"Use your imagination," I said. "Try to think how you'd look with Dottie Peale in New York."

"I could find a good civilian job," he said.

"Yes," I told him, "Dottie can find you one all right."

"We could get a ranch somewhere," he said. "Or travel."

"Yes," I said, "and how would you look carrying the bags?"

Then I knew I had gone too far. I had trampled on the edges of his dream. His face had grown brick-red and his voice shook. "Get going before I kick you downstairs."

"Just see you don't kick yourself downstairs," I said.

Someone was beginning to play the piano, and he grasped my arm just above the elbow.

"Wait a minute," he said. He had controlled his face and voice, and he shook his head slowly. "I told you" — and his voice was very restrained — "I told you to stop riding me. Don't do it again, son. . . . Don't you see there are some things I can't help?"

"Yes," I said, "I see."

"Then shake hands," he said. "Damn it, you and I didn't make this world. . . . Come on."

As General Gooch had said that afternoon, when Goodwin started going, he always kept on going.

"Bud," he called as we were going downstairs, "come here, I want you to meet Sid Skelton, and call to Joe to fix him up a steak — rare. Where's Mrs. Merriwell? I'd better skip around and see if she's taken care of. Take Sid to find Enid and Muriel, will you, Bud?"

Colonel Joyce shook hands with me warmly.

"Well," he said, "we'd better find the girls. They'll either be in the kitchen or outside at the grill." We found Enid Joyce first, on our way across the sun porch. There were streaks of gray in her dark hair, but there was no age at all in her eyes.

"Why, Sid Skelton," she said. "Excuse me, I *have* to think of you as Sid. Muriel still talks about how sweet you were to her and Mel in Connecticut. . . . Bud, dear, see if you can't round

up a detail to get dishes into the kitchen before people begin stepping on them. There's too much rank here tonight. Muriel and I should have asked more young officers and their wives. Muriel wanted to ask some of the Navy, too, because of the Joint Chiefs, but I said let's leave the Navy out of it for once and avoid the strain. Isn't it wonderful about Mel?"

"It sounds fine," I said.

"I was so afraid Muriel would have to go to Texas or somewhere, and now she can settle down and uncrate some of that lovely furniture of hers and make a home for Mel and the boys. Dear Muriel. I don't believe Mel *ever* knew how anxious Muriel was. It's everything she's ever wanted."

The steps from the sun porch descended onto a small lawn bright under a floodlight that might have been borrowed from some nearby installation.

"Do you remember the Rossiters' parties at Shafter?" someone was saying. Everybody except me seemed to remember, but this did not matter, because I saw Muriel coming toward me.

"Sid," she said, "this makes everything perfect." She drew me away from the guests on the lawn.

"Have you seen Mel?" she asked. "I can't tell you how many people were after this place in Plans. . . . Well, I'm the one who ought to know." She laughed happily. "A wife can be useful sometimes. Mel doesn't seem to understand that at last we're really going to be able to settle down." She lowered her voice. "He's right on his way to almost anything there is and he doesn't know it."

I nodded. I could not say anything to spoil it for her.

"And now you'll have to meet everyone," she said.

Hardly anyone in the house was below the rank of colonel. I saw a general doing card tricks, and two other generals, surrounded by officers' wives, exhibiting Roman wrestling.

"That's 'Skid' Gabriel playing the piano," Mrs. Goodwin said. "It's just as though we were back at Schofield."

I thought of Muriel's theory about music and the Army. The officer was only a major.

Melville Goodwin had already gathered a group in the living room and they had been singing "Smiles" and "I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl" and other songs of World War I.

"And now I want you to meet General Merriwell," Mrs. Goodwin said. "He's Mel's new chief, you know."

General Merriwell was the only three-star general present. He stood alone, three paces behind the crowd at the piano, not singing but listening tolerantly.

"Muriel, my dear," he said, "this is a delightful party. Do you remember the night years ago when Gertrude and I dined with you? Where was it?"

"Wasn't it at that little place of ours at Kahala?"

General Merriwell thought carefully.

"No, no," he said, "I remember Kahala, but I was thinking of when I was in G-3 in Manila and Melville was a company commander."

"Oh, yes," Muriel said, "Mel still goes on about Company A."

"I wonder where Gertrude is," the General said.

"I think she's playing bridge," Muriel answered.

"Then let's sit down," General Merriwell said. "I hope Mr. Skelton will excuse me if I talk shop for just a moment. No, don't go, Mr. Skelton," and he patted my arm. "I just wanted to say, Muriel, how pleased I am to have Mel next door. It's time we had more men in Plans with long and practical combat records. But I'm a little afraid, from something that transpired this afternoon, that Mel is reluctant."

"That's just the way Mel always is when he starts with desk work," Muriel said. "He always expresses doubts."

"Somehow or other," General Merriwell said, as though he had not heard her, "officers with combat records are often restless. Well, if Melville did not want this, he should not have rated so high at the War College. I went over all Mel's qualifications with

Foghorn. By the way, his arthritis has been pretty bad lately."

"Yes, I know," Muriel said. "Mel and I called on him yesterday."

"Whenever anything important comes up, I like to get the Grimshaw angle. Foghorn told quite a funny story about the first time he saw you and Mel and you fixed a sand box for him. He says not to worry about Mel. He says put Mel anywhere and he can do anything."

"That's awfully sweet of Foghorn," Muriel Goodwin said. "Melville, come over here."

Melville Goodwin stood attentively in front of us. "What is it, dear?" he said.

"The boss has just told me that Foghorn says, put you anywhere and you can do anything. Now, aren't you pleased?"

"Yes, dear," Melville Goodwin answered, "very pleased. Thank you for passing that on, sir. Sid, I think you and I ought to leave for the airport."

I had thought that I could simply call a taxi, but the General seemed anxious to go with me, and somehow I still rated a Public Relations car, which Goochy had ordered.

People were leaving already, the General said, and his ducking out for a few minutes would not break up the party. . . .

"Airport, son," he said to the driver. He turned up the glass window that separated us from the driver's seat.

"Driving out here makes me feel as though I were pushing off somewhere myself," he said. "I wish to God I were—anywhere. Sid, do you ever feel as though you'd missed something?"

"Yes," I answered, "I suppose everybody feels that way sometimes."

"It came over me in Paris when I saw you and Dottie Peale. That's why I began reciting about old Ulysses. Old Ulysses must have felt just that way."

"That only goes to show that people like you should never mess around with civilians, Mel," I said. "You can't be me, and I can't be you."

"All right," he said, "let me ask you this one question. You wouldn't want to be me, now, would you?"

"No," I said, and then I was afraid that I had sounded rudely fervent. "I wouldn't have what it takes."

"All right," he said, "then you ought to see why I don't want to be myself. Dottie sees."

"Yes," I said, "Dottie doesn't want to be herself either."

"Poor kid," he said. "Dottie's never had a break."

"How's that again?" I asked.

"You don't understand Dottie," he said. "She's like a . . ."

He stopped. He was not good at similes.

"Like a what?" I asked.

"Like a bird fluttering in a cage," he said. "Dottie knows what I'm going through. She's got a lot of insight, Sid . . . and I'll tell you something else. Dottie's got guts. If we had to, we could both go down the line together. Dottie wouldn't be afraid."

Dottie had done what she wanted with him, and he was sewed up now.

"Mel," I began, "take hold of yourself," but we were pulling up at the airport.

"I'm handling this myself from now on out," he said. "Good night, son. Happy landings."

"Happy landings, Mel," I said.

I was sickeningly certain of where he was going to land. I felt as though I were walking away from a wreck, but I was leaving.

CHAPTER 29

The Service Takes Care of Its Own

MELVILLE GOODWIN was still beside me invisibly when I was talking things over with Mr. George Burtheimer at breakfast in Chicago, and he was still beside me when I flew back to New York. Yet it never occurred to me that I would be called into a conference to discuss the love life of Melville Goodwin, until I suddenly heard from General Gooch. He precipitated himself into the middle of my affairs, right in the broadcasting company, at a most awkward moment.

GILBERT FRARY reached New York at two o'clock in the afternoon the day after I had arrived from Chicago, and he sent me word through Miss Maynard that he wanted to see me in his office at three. I was sure that he had stopped over in Chicago, but I was not worried about this any longer, because I had done rather well with Mr. Burtheimer. I was willing and happy to see Gilbert in his office at three.

I understood, of course, that there was going to be a scene, because Gilbert always liked scenes.

"Hello, Gilbert," I said. "How was it on the Coast?"

"Sidney," Gilbert said, and his voice sounded choked. "Sidney, may I ask you a single question?"

"Why, yes," I said, "go right ahead, Gilbert."

"My question can be phrased in a single word, Sidney," he said. "I don't want to analyze my disillusionment about your integrity. Perhaps there has been some mistake, and I still want to love your integrity and still idealize a lovely human relationship. The question I want to ask you, Sidney, is, Why, simply Why?"

"Why what, Gilbert?" I asked.

There were genuine tears in Gilbert's eyes. "Please, Sidney," he said, "don't turn the knife in the wound. For the last 48 hours I have felt as though I have been impaled on steel."

"I'm sorry if you've suffered, Gilbert," I said, "but then perhaps we have both suffered."

"Sidney," Gilbert said, "before we leave this room I want everything to be as it was formerly between us. Why did you ever mistrust me — of all people, Sidney?"

"Perhaps I was wrong, Gilbert," I said. "I'm sorry if I shouldn't have mistrusted you."

"That's a very lovely thing for you to say," Gilbert Frary said. "I'm the one who should be sorry, Sidney. I should never have suggested even whimsically that you should speak commercials."

"Let's put it this way, Gilbert," I told him. "Let's say that I lost faith in myself, but it's all right now. It helps me to know that George thinks I'm a valuable piece of property in the face of competitive bidding. There's no reason now for him or you to worry about the White Wall Rubber Company."

"All I want," Gilbert said, "all I've ever wanted, is to have you basically and absolutely happy, Sidney. The program has been a part of my life. Forgive me for having interfered."

"That's all right, Gilbert," I said, "and you won't have to bother about it so much now."

"George said a great many lovely things about you," Gilbert said. "And I said some lovely things about you, too, to George. Sidney, basically what was it that you said to George?"

I could thank Melville Goodwin for my answer.

"I told him let's cut out the horsefeathers," I said, "and if he didn't like me, I had another job, and in the future I'd like to deal with him more closely personally. No reflection on you."

"I always knew," Gilbert Frary said, "that George would think you were a lovely person if he really sat around a table with you."

We both knew exactly where we were with each other, al-

though I knew that neither of us would put it into words. Gilbert still looked at me sadly, but there was a quality of respect in his sadness which he had never displayed before.

"Now, Sidney," he said, "after this misunderstanding, what is it that will make you happy?"

But before we could get down to facts, the door opened. It was Gilbert Frary's secretary.

"I'm frightfully sorry, Mr. Frary," Miss Hamilton said. "Miss Maynard has brought an Army officer in to see Mr. Skelton. His name is General Gooch. He says he comes from the General Staff in Washington." Before she had even finished speaking, General Gooch himself had entered Gilbert Frary's sanctum.

"I hope I'm not interrupting anything," he said. General Gooch was in his uniform, wearing the sunburst of the General Staff. "I've got a plane waiting and the boss wants to see you in Washington before six o'clock."

"What boss?" I asked.

"Damn it," General Gooch said, "the Chief's office, and we've got to step on it, Sid."

"Why didn't you telephone me?" I asked.

"I've been trying all morning," General Gooch said. "They wouldn't put me through."

I could not blame Gilbert Frary for the way he looked.

"Do you know Mr. Frary, General Gooch?" I said.

"How-do-you-do? I'm sorry to interrupt you gentlemen in this way," General Gooch said, "but it's about you-know-who, our mutual friend. I suggested to the boss he'd better see you. It's highly delicate and highly personal."

He looked at Gilbert Frary as if he were waiting for him to withdraw.

"Listen, Goochy," I said, "I have to broadcast at seven o'clock. I'll leave here with you at 7:15, and that's the best I can do."

General Gooch and I stood there for a second, each trying to stare the other down.

"All right," General Gooch said, "I'll do what I can with it. Come on, sister." He nodded to Miss Hamilton, and they left.

"Where were we in our conversation?" Gilbert asked.

"You wanted to make me happy," I said.

"But that is all I want," Gilbert said. "Sidney, name anything."

It was time to get tough.

"While this contract lasts," I said, "I'll negotiate all program problems personally with the sponsor instead of going through you. Perhaps we'd better put it in writing, Gilbert."

"Sidney," Gilbert began, "this is so unnecessary. Between friends, a gentlemanly agreement."

"A gentlemanly agreement between friends in writing," I said. "Next you throw Alan Featherbee out of this shop."

Gilbert laughed. It was a tragic, broken laugh.

"Excuse me, Sidney," he said, "but to think that this individual should have been the basis of our trouble. Why didn't you speak to me about him earlier? I only ask you, why?"

"Well," I said, "I'm speaking about him now."

"If it gives you a moment's mental ease, Sidney," Gilbert said soothingly. "And what else?"

"I want loyalty from the bottom up"—I was grateful to Mel Goodwin for this, too. "I want you to fire Art Hertz and let me get my own writer."

"I love it when you speak frankly, Sidney," Gilbert said. "Subconsciously I've always distrusted Art Hertz."

"And while we're on the subject, Miss Maynard had better go, too," I said.

BACK IN my own office I was conscious of Miss Maynard's avid curiosity.

"That general," she said—"I mean General Gooch—is waiting for you inside, and he's had me put through two telephone calls to Washington. I hope it's what you wanted, Mr. Skelton."

She watched me anxiously, striving to read the future. There

was no reason to feel sorry for Miss Maynard. She would be assigned elsewhere in the studio.

General Gooch was in my office looking sour.

"It's all right," he said, "we've got more time now. The meeting will be at Grimshaw's at 2130, and you have a room at the Mayflower. It's been one hell of a day. I didn't know until around 1200 that Goodwin had blown his top."

"What's happened now?" I said.

"Don't you know he's planning to marry this Mrs. Peale?" General Gooch asked. "You've heard him speak of Lieutenant General Grimshaw, haven't you? Well, this morning he told Grimshaw he's leaving the service and marrying this Mrs. Peale. Damn! Why did they put him into Plans?"

"Has he told Mrs. Goodwin?"

"No," General Gooch said, "not yet. The Old Man made Mel promise to keep still until they've talked further. Damn it, it's not too late to handle this some way. Mel has some good friends. There's a sort of a committee that wants to find out how they can handle this Mrs. Peale."

"Where's Goodwin now?" I asked.

General Gooch contracted the corners of his mouth.

"Where do you think he would be? Right here in New York City with this woman." General Gooch laughed bitterly. "I don't know why I love the guy."

It was not for me to argue that I could serve no good purpose by going to Washington.

"All right," I said, "I'll go."

"You bet you'll go," he said.

His tone implied that I was personally responsible for the whole problem, but at the same time he looked more cheerful. The proper echelons had taken over. They understood about women and war from every angle in those echelons.

"I'm an Army brat," General Gooch was saying, "and ever since I was in diapers I've assumed no sanctimonious attitudes.

Personally, when it comes to a thing like this, and I've seen plenty, I like to take a broad-gauged regulation view."

General Gooch half closed his eyes, as though he could take the view better by squinting.

"Now take Mel," he said. "He's a tactical genius, and I wouldn't be surprised to see him make a corpse get up and walk. He's an almost perfect officer. But Mel got married too young. There's something about the Point that makes for early marriage. Whenever you see a pretty girl at the Point, you always think of matrimony, and you want to make an honest woman of every girl you kiss. Now my second year at the Point I had a blind drag. . . . Well, never mind it now.

"Frankly, let's lay it on the line," General Gooch went on. "Mel ought to have played around more at the proper age. But when a man acts like a kid when he's 50 . . ."

There was a knock on the door — Art Hertz with the script.

"Leave it here with me, Art," I said. "I'll call you if I want any changes."

I was beginning to know more than was decent about Melville Goodwin. The forces that were converging on him now had begun in Hallowell years ago, when Muriel had seen to it that he did not look at another girl. Something in him had been unfulfilled. If he could not stop, at least he was doing what he wanted.

I picked up the script and read the old familiar salutation.

"Good evening, friends," I read.

It was vapid and insincere. I was measured and I was safe. I would never throw my heart over a jump. I would never have the bravery or the splendid regardlessness of Melville Goodwin.

I was only asked to Washington to tell some high-ranking friends of Melville Goodwin's, confidentially, what I knew of Dottie Peale. Through it all, I felt like a young officer appearing before a board. They listened to me with flattering attention, but I could not gather what they were going to do, if anything.

General Grimshaw fitted perfectly the portrait I had made of him—a tall, deliberate man whose eyes were ice-gray like his hair. His years of complete authority echoed in every inflection of his voice. Although he was gracious, I felt nervous whenever he addressed me.

“I’m sure I speak for everyone here,” he said, “when I say we are most grateful to you for taking so much time and trouble. You have shed some very real light on this situation, Mr. Skelton. Like you, we are all friends and admirers of Melville Goodwin. I think we can move on from here more confidently.”

He did not say where they would move, but there was no doubt that they were not going to sit still, and when they were through with me I was whisked away.

“General Gooch,” Foghorn Grimshaw said, “will you please find transportation to return Mr. Skelton to his hotel, and then join us here again?”

“Thank you, sir,” I said. “Good night.”

A curtain had fallen and that was all. If General Goodwin’s friends were taking him to pieces and putting him together again, I had nothing further to do with the process.

CHAPTER 30

She Had to Say “Poor Sidney”

I HAD not been able to get out to Savin Hill since the Washington broadcast so there was a great deal I had to tell Helen when I finally did get home on Friday.

“But I still don’t see,” she said, “why you had to fly down again to Washington.”

“I went down again because Melville Goodwin’s going to leave the service and marry Dottie Peale,” I said.

"Oh, dear," she said, "oh, dear. Sid, look . . . Dottie Peale called up this afternoon."

"She did?" I answered. "What did she want?"

"She invited herself out here for lunch tomorrow," Helen said. "There must be some connection."

Of course Dottie had to talk to someone, and of course I would have had to see her eventually, but I had hoped to have a day or two completely free of Melville Goodwin.

Ever since we had bought the place in Connecticut, Dottie had been saying that she must drop in to see us. Helen had always begged her to wait until everything was decorated, and Dottie had said she would not drop in suddenly, although she could not wait to see Helen in her new setting. I wished that I did not know so well what Dottie would say and think.

NEXT MORNING, the wailing hum of a vacuum cleaner sounded in the living room as I came down the stairs. Mr. Brown had been brought in from outside to do the rugs, and Mrs. Griscoc, the cleaning woman, was dusting the library. Oscar and Hilda were setting the dining-room table, and Williams was waxing the hall floor. Helen was arranging flowers and supervising. The electric waxer and the vacuum cleaner made the house sound like an industrial plant. However, it was to have all the earmarks of a simple informal lunch — just the Skeltons at home.

Helen was wearing a whipcord suit that made her look as efficient as Dottie Peale.

"Everything looks all right, Helen," I said. "Why didn't you leave it alone?" It was a useless remark, but the activity made me nervous.

"I've been up since seven," Helen said. "You know how particular she is. She always sees everything."

Helen did not realize that this abnormal neatness was as revealing as untidiness. Women were more vicious and more intolerant than men.

"All right," I said, "but you'll get it looking like a feature piece in *House and Garden*."

"You know what she used to say about Tenth Street," Helen said. "I'm not going to have her saying . . ." She stopped and called to Mrs. Griscoe and told her not to forget the powder room.

"What aren't you going to have her say?" I asked.

"I'm not going to have her say, 'Poor Sidney.' I heard her say it once."

Helen should have known that nothing she could ever do would prevent Dottie from saying, "Poor Sidney."

"DARLING," Dottie said, when she arrived the next day, "I'm so glad to see you. How's the country squire? All the way up the road, I've been wondering which ancestral mansion could be yours. Helen, darling, how beautiful this is! You were so right in not consulting Sidney's taste, because Sidney has no taste, has he? It's you in your own setting."

"If you say so," Helen said, "everything must be all right, Dottie, dear. I've been on pins and needles to know what you would think of the house."

Dottie laughed affectionately. "Darling," she said, "you must really learn not to mind what other people think. Sidney's beginning to look positively corn-fed, isn't he? It's wonderful what you've done to him, darling."

Nothing that had been said would be forgotten, and furthermore it would probably grow to be all my fault, when Helen took it up with me later.

Just as I started with the cocktails, Farouche came in. He was brushed and he had a new bowknot on the top of his cranium, but like Dottie he seemed worried and distrait.

"Oh," Dottie said, "where did you ever come from, you lovely handsome man? Oh, woozums, woozums, woozums!" And she sank down on her knees and threw her arms around Farouche.

Helen and I looked at each other, and she raised her eyebrows slightly. Some impulse made me take her hand, and we stood for a moment watching this erratic exhibition between Dottie and Farouche.

"Sid," Helen said, "hurry with those cocktails. I think we'd all better have a drink."

Such anxiety was not like Helen, who never did approve of cocktails in the middle of the day.

"All right," I said, "all right," and somehow everything was all right. It was as if I had been telling her that I liked everything she had done and that she was not like Dottie Peale.

The embrace was over. Dottie was back in her chair again and "Woozums" was wandering about the room distractedly, like an old man looking for his glasses.

"What is he doing?" Dottie asked. "Does he want to go out?"

"I think he's looking for his rubber ring," I said.

"I wish everyone weren't always looking for something," Dottie said. "Is he happy when he gets it?"

"Yes," I said, "he seems to be."

"I wish I could settle for a rubber ring," Dottie said.

For the first time her voice was kind and natural, but her remark was surprising, because it seemed to me that she had finally settled for a rubber ring herself.

I had been exposed to all of Dottie's moods. I could even classify them cold-bloodedly. As I watched her now, she was looking coyly into her Martini. She could hold a glass as gracefully as a girl in a Sargent portrait handled a fan. I do not mean she drank too much. She was just posing as *The Girl with the Martini*.

"Sid," Dottie said, "did you tell Helen about Gilbert Frary? I didn't know you'd have the guts to do what you did with Frary."

"I couldn't let the home team down," I told her. "If you want to know, I've learned a lot about guts from General Goodwin."

This seemed like a graceful way of bringing Melville Goodwin into the conversation. "I kept thinking of Mel," I went on, "when

I was slugging it out with Gilbert and the boys." I filled Dottie's glass. "Well, here's to Mel."

It seemed a handsome thing to say, but Dottie looked at me as though I had been crudely clumsy, and then she blushed. I had not seen Dottie blush in years.

"No, no," she said, "never mind about Mel now. Helen, darling, here's to Sid. I'm glad you've done so much for Sid."

I saw Helen's eyes open wide in her astonishment.

"Damn it," Dottie said chokingly, "I don't know what's the matter with me."

"Oh, Dottie," I heard Helen say.

Dottie was dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief.

"I don't know what's the matter with me," she said again. "Don't say anything."

Fortunately, I knew exactly what to say. "Come on," I said, "pull your socks up, Dot."

"I'm all right now," Dottie said. "Don't look so worried, Sid. It's not alcohol — just nerves."

"Why, here's Camilla," I heard Helen saying. "Come in, dear, and shake hands with Mrs. Peale and don't forget to curtsy."

Camilla looked very shy and small in her patent-leather slippers and her smocked dress of Liberty silk.

"Why, darling," Dottie Peale said, "how sweet you look. Won't you give me a big kiss, darling?"

Of course Camilla did not want to give her a big kiss, but she complied politely and restrainedly and then with the unerring instinct of a child she disengaged herself from Dottie Peale and stood leaning lightly against me. I put my arm around her and held her tight.

"I've always wanted to have a little girl," Dottie said.

She always wanted something, but it was not like her to drop all barriers in this way. No one spoke until Dottie spoke again. I had never seen her so insecure, and I could think of nothing to say to fill the embarrassed gap of silence.

"And I don't suppose I ever will," she said, "but then, maybe I wouldn't be very good at it."

By now there was no doubt that Dottie was deeply worried about something. She ate very little all through luncheon and in the living room afterward she did not touch her coffee.

"Helen, dear," she said at last, "would you mind if I took Sid away somewhere for a while? I don't mind his repeating what I say, but I don't seem to be able to say it to you both at once."

"Keep him as long as you like," Helen said, "and we can all have tea later."

I could find no sharpness in Helen's words, and I had a sense that this disappointed Dottie.

As soon as we reached the library, Dottie put her arm through mine as though we both were lonely.

"Oh, Sid," she said, "how did it ever work this way? Oh, I'm so unhappy, darling."

Then she threw her arms around me and pressed her head against my shoulder—but not the way she had with Farouche. It was an excellent thing that Helen was not there.

"Oh, Sid!" she sobbed.

"Don't," I said, "don't, Dot."

It was useless to say "don't." There was that destructive driving force inside her. No man, nothing, would ever answer her desire, and unfortunately we both knew it.

"Sid," she said. "You've got to help me, Sid."

"Help you about what, Dot?" I asked.

She pushed herself away from me, but she still held my hand. "Of course you know what . . . That brass-hat general of yours, Major General Melville A. Goodwin! Do you know what he wants? He wants me to marry him and now the whole Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington are beginning to expect me to. Oh, Sidney, I can't. You've got to help me, Sid."

I had never seen her look so defeated. She turned away from me and took a few unsteady steps toward the armchair by the

fireplace. She slumped into it heavily, with none of her beguiling schoolgirl manner. Her skirt had ridden up above one knee, showing the edge of her slip with its meticulously embroidered border, and nothing could have confirmed her wretchedness more eloquently. For once in her life Dottie did not care how she looked.

"Oh, Sid," she said, "please say you're fond of me. It's such an awful mess. You are always so right about everything. I never knew he would take everything so seriously. I honestly don't see how I could have known it would go as far as this."

Poor Mel Goodwin, I was thinking, who had laid everything he had at her feet. He was worth a thousand of her, but she did not want what he had to offer. It was absolutely like her to draw back in the end. "Didn't you want him to be serious?" I said. I sat down in the armchair opposite her.

"Darling," she answered, "of course I knew he loved me, but I didn't know he would love me in this way. He's so undeviating, darling. Do you remember that poem he keeps reciting? 'Push off and sitting well in order smite . . .' I'll scream, if I hear it again." She stopped and looked at me sharply. "And did you ever see those clothes of his—that tweed coat and his double-breasted suit?"

Disillusion always came from details.

"I don't mean to be unkind," she said. "Of course, I was carried away. I've been so lonely, Sid, and, well, he's a man."

"I've heard you say that before," I said.

"Sid," she said, "I know that what I'm saying sounds awful. I still love him—in theory—but it's all too much for me to manage. Sidney, please be kind."

Her love was always limited, and perhaps she recognized this as she sat there wretchedly, twisting her hands nervously, pulling at the loose edges of her life.

"Darling," she said, "it *did* seem possible at first. Everything would have been possible, if he'd only been a little more like

other people, more like you and me, but he's so—so honest, darling. Do you know what he wants now? He wants to retire from the service and for us to go away somewhere together. He wants us to take a little bungalow or something and live—in Carmel, California." Her voice ended on a higher note.

"And that isn't all," she went on. "Darling, yesterday another general came, an old one. He was so polite—something like a priest. Give me a cigarette."

She was feeling better, or she would not have asked for one, but her hands were shaking.

"What was his name?" I asked.

"Oh, he was someone Mel always talks about," she said. "Grimshaw, Foghorn Grimshaw. Why does everyone have some nickname in the Army? And do you know what he wanted? He wanted to congratulate me, darling . . . but they don't want Mel to leave the service. They want us to wait until everything can be arranged properly. Time, he kept saying, time. . . . But Mel wants to go to Carmel, or else he wants to be somewhere with troops. Oh, Sid, I'm so ashamed."

"Well," I said, "you ought to be. You haven't any right to ruin Goodwin's life."

"Darling," she said, "I don't want to ruin his life. Sid, aren't you going to help me?" She was struggling like a fish.

I was thinking of Mel Goodwin and I felt a sudden surge of revolt. "No," I said. "Damn it, Dottie, if you feel this way, you've got to tell him so. I can't pick up the check."

"Sid," Dottie said, "I'll never trust you or anyone again."

She had twisted everything around, as she always could.

"You never have, Dot," I said.

She stood up and I stood up.

"I hate your guts," she said. "I guess I'd better be leaving now, but I do want to say good-bye to poor Helen. Will you have someone call my car, please?"

I opened the library door and she walked past me.

I was glad to be able to tell Helen about it. At least there was a chance now of bringing some order into Melville Goodwin's problem. The worst of it was that I had once been almost in his position. Thank heaven Dottie was gone, I kept thinking.

"You ought not to be so hard on her," Helen said. "She can't help it, Sid."

Helen and I were like good children who had behaved themselves. We were safe at Savin Hill.

I never suspected that Muriel Goodwin would be with us herself Monday night.

CHAPTER 31

And She Never Dropped a Stitch

IT WAS cold and windy on Monday night when I walked into Savin Hill after the broadcast. I could not understand why Helen did not come into the hall to meet me as usual after my trip from the city.

"Hello, dear," she said, when I reached the living room. "Here's Muriel Goodwin."

Helen spoke as though I were Camilla being prepared for company. Mrs. Melville Goodwin was seated on the sofa, working on another washcloth. "Don't get up. You might drop a stitch," I said.

"Oh, no," she said, "I never drop them," and she held out her hand graciously, as though Helen and I were young people on the post on whom she was making an informal call.

"I just called up rather on the spur of the moment," she said. "I had run up to New York to see Pamela Hardec—that's an old Army family who were stationed with us at Colon—and then I thought of you and Helen, and I thought it might be better for Melville if he were by himself a day longer."

It was an effort for me not to look at Helen, but Muriel Goodwin was the chairman of the board conducting the meeting.

"We've been having such a nice time," she was saying, "talking about everything under the sun all through supper, especially about children and husbands."

"I'm awfully glad to see you," I said.

"I'm glad, too," Mrs. Goodwin answered. "I was just telling Helen I wished you were both in the service, too. It's funny, I still keep on feeling as though you were."

"Sidney," Helen said, "I think I'd better go upstairs and leave you both together."

"Don't run away, dear," Muriel Goodwin said. "Of course, I'm here to talk about the General—but there's nothing you shouldn't hear."

I found a chair and pulled it near the sofa where Mrs. Goodwin sat. She waited for me, giving me time to settle myself, and I found myself doing this hastily and guiltily, like a young officer called suddenly into conference. Then she spoke again.

"I know you're both fond of Melville," she said. "He has a gift for making friends. I've been very touched by how many people are concerned about him at present. Now General Grimshaw . . . Did Melville ever mention him—Foghorn Grimshaw?" She was no longer the General's wife come to call. She was the spokesman at an Army conference, giving a thumbnail sketch of background material.

"You know, dear," she said to Helen, "Sidney made a very favorable impression on General Grimshaw. He went out of his way to speak of Sidney and Goochy likes Sidney and Robert liked him, too. That's why I can't help feeling that you're all in the family." And she smiled at me again. Muriel was taking over and in a way I could sympathize with Melville Goodwin.

"I admit that General Grimshaw and General Gooch, too, know the General very well," Muriel Goodwin was saying, "but I know the General rather well myself. Now they are talking to me

of waiting, and of time curing everything. Of course I know all about waiting. You have to, if you're married in the service . . . but I would really like to know something definite, and no one will tell me. Of course, a part of me thinks of Mel as my husband," she went on, "but ever since I was a girl in Hallowell, another part of me has always thought of what he means to other people, and what he stands for. He's something more than *my* Melville Goodwin. Do you see what I mean when I say I don't think of him entirely as a person?"

She paused and turned her head toward me abruptly. I had often thought how pretty she must have been when she was a girl, and I had no impression of faded beauty now. She laid the washcloth on her knees and waited to be sure I understood.

"You mean," I said, "that you think of him as Government property?"

She nodded to me quickly and pulled a long loop of thread through with her hook. "I hoped you'd say that," she said. "I suppose I'm talking from the point of view of other service wives, and it's hard for people on the outside sometimes to see it."

Muriel stopped again, and memories of the Goodwins in Tientsin, Schofield, Panama, Benning and Bailey crowded uninvited into the living room. There was Goodwin at the Point, and Goodwin, captain of Company A. I was with him near Château-Thierry when the machine guns opened up. I encountered him walking back wounded in North Africa, and I could hear the enlisted man saying those words that he wanted on his tombstone. Melville Goodwin had been an officer who earned every cent of money that the taxpayers had paid out on him.

"Dear me, I've talked a lot," Muriel Goodwin said, "but I've a reason for it." She laid down her crocheting again and gave me all her attention. "There's not much reason to discuss the personal side of Mel and me," she said. "The boys are all grown up, and besides, I'm old enough to know that certain things do happen sometimes. But, Sidney, I've got to know what to do next . . .



and I have to come to you, because he met . . . *her* through you."

"How much has he told you," I asked, "about all this?"

"Why, he's never told me anything," she said. "Poor Mel, he's only getting ready to tell me, and if you want to know, I'm pretty tired of waiting."

Once again, as they put it in Muriel Goodwin's service, I was carrying the ball.

"Of course," I began, "in a place like the ETO . . ." but Muriel Goodwin stopped me.

"Oh, Sidney," she said, "of course I know what men do in a war theater. I know he met her in Paris, and of course I know

that her name is Mrs. Peale, and that she's living on 72nd Street in New York, and of course I know she's pretty. Mel left her picture in his suitcase—Mel, who always talks about security!"

She laughed in a way that included me in the little joke, but I did not feel like laughing.

"Don't you think it would be easier," I asked her, "if you told me everything you know, and then we could start from there?"

She nodded and I could think of her again as young Mrs. Melville Goodwin.

"I knew you'd be loyal to him," she said, "but please don't be like the rest of them and tell me it's a passing phase. I haven't lived all my life with plaster saints." When I heard that expression, it made me think of Goochy. "There is quite a little sex in the Army. There are unattached officers who are feeling lonely, and there are all the marriages that don't seem to work. . . . When I was in Manila and Mel was out on maneuvers, there was someone who wanted me to leave Mel . . . I can understand what Mel's been going through. Men are simple when they fall in love and lose their sense of proportion. There's the telephone bill with the New York calls and those trips to New York, and everyone covering up—even Enid. . . . He's like a little boy in some ways. . . . He's even talked to me about her."

"I thought you said he hadn't," I told her.

"Oh, not in that way," she answered, "only subtly—a Mrs. Peale whom he had met in Paris, and I must meet her, because he would like to know what I thought of her." She was smiling. "Any woman can tell when her man's infatuated, but what I want to know is—does Mel really love her, Sidney? Because if he does . . . he'd better have her. If he wants her, I don't want him." She tossed the washcloth down, and perhaps General Goodwin was crocheted out.

I felt as though I had been thrown hard against the wall of her composure and I was very glad I was not Melville Goodwin. I tried to sound confident, but it was a very sour attempt.

"Before you make up your mind," I began, "you'd better let me tell you what I can about Mel and Dottie Peale." I cleared my throat. "Well, I was a PRO . . ."

Next I was on the plane again with all those VIPs and Dottie Peale. Then we were in the Ritz again, with the pressed duck and the champagne. I was trying to explain Dottie Peale. There was wistful appeal to her restiveness and discontent, especially in the neighborhood of a war. It was inevitable that Melville Goodwin should have been attracted by her.

I was doing my best for Melville Goodwin, but neither Helen nor Muriel showed sympathy or enthusiasm. I was only saying that Paris was a long way from home, and behavior was not to be measured according to peacetime standards.

Muriel Goodwin frowned, but she picked up her work again, which gave me a note of hope.

"I thought everything would be the way it always was, when I saw him at the airport," she said.

"It would have been," I told her, "if she hadn't called him up. She's a very persistent girl."

She was rolling up the washcloth, and I braced myself. She put it in her bag and jerked the mouth of the bag together.

"I know," she said quietly. "Well, that's all there is, isn't it? Helen, I wonder if you have a sleeping pill? I don't want to be alone with this all night."

I wished I were back in the ETO again, in a world without women, and I wished that Melville Goodwin had died, as he very well might have and should have, in North Africa or Salerno or somewhere along the Rhine.

"You may have a right to be hard on him," I said, "but I don't think he meant this to go so far. He only went overboard after he was assigned to Plans. He wanted to get away from the whole thing."

"Of course, I knew he wouldn't like Plans," she went on. "He never knows what's good for him."

"He thinks you had something to do with it," I said.

"Of course I did," she said. "I've always had to do that sort of thinking for him. He has to be in Plans."

Again I began to feel sympathetic for Melville Goodwin, and suddenly I shared some of his exasperation.

"Well," I said, "men like to lead lives of their own sometimes, or they like to think they do. You can't always blame men when something gets to be too much."

She did not answer, and I went on right down the line. "Besides, Muriel, there's something you ought to know. . . . Whenever Dottie gets something, she wants something else. She and Mel haven't much in common, you know, and I've an idea she's losing interest in him already." I felt in my pockets for a cigarette. "In fact, she's told me so," I added.

"So she's losing interest," Muriel Goodwin said. "That's almost too much, isn't it? That really makes me angry."

She reached in her workbag and pulled out the washcloth. "I know sometimes Mel is — well, heavy, and sometimes he's terribly intense, and if you hear his stories again and again — but she can't have heard them so often."

Muriel Goodwin dropped her crocheting abruptly and stood up. "What time is it?" she asked.

It was after 11 o'clock.

"If I could use the telephone," she said, "I'd better call up Washington. Ellen Grimshaw might still be up and I can fly down in the morning."

I went with her to the library to turn on the lights.

"I want to speak to Washington, D.C.," she was saying when I left her. "The number is Decatur . . ."

Helen was standing by the dying embers of the fireplace. We stood in that constrained position of a host and hostess waiting for their guest to finish her call.

"Sidney?" Helen said.

"Yes?" I said.

"Did you notice? She dropped her washcloth on the floor. Please pick it up and put it on the sofa beside her bag."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because she wouldn't like us to know she forgot it." I picked up the washcloth guiltily and quickly. "She's trying so hard to be a brave little woman. You know, it's been terrible because nothing ever broke."

"Maybe nothing in her ever has broken," I said.

"Sidney," she asked, "do you think she cares about him?"

"Yes," I said, "she cares for what he is."

"You know that isn't what I mean," she said. "If you really love someone, it doesn't matter what he is."

"Of course she loves him," I said, "but love isn't a constant quality. It has its ups and downs like anything else."

Helen shook her head.

"It doesn't with a woman," she answered. "I love you and I don't care what you are."

No one else should have heard us, especially Muriel Goodwin, and there she was, in the doorway. I could not tell how long she had been standing there—but I knew as soon as she spoke.

"Yes, of course I love him," she said, "and it is something that doesn't change, even if you think it does."

I remember her blue-gray hair and her black broadcloth suit and her stocky figure. There was absolutely nothing to say.

"I wish it weren't so late," she said. Her voice was perfectly steady, but her shoulders began to shake. "I ought to be back in Washington. Please don't say I don't love him," and then she sobbed, "she must be a damn fool."

It was no place for a man. Muriel Goodwin must have hated to have me see her with all defenses down, and she pulled herself together. "Sidney," she said, "will you give me my bag, please? It's where I left it on the sofa."

I was glad that Helen had told me to pick up the washcloth.

Muriel Goodwin was looking for a handkerchief, of course, but instead she found the washcloth.

"I never thought I'd cry into this," she said. "I'm sorry. I always hate crying women. Good night, Sidney."

"Let me go up with you," Helen said. "Don't worry about anything now. We can fix everything in the morning."

"Good night, Muriel," I said. "If you need anything, ask Helen, won't you?"

But she did not need anything any longer. She was the General's wife again and I was the young officer on the post.

"Of course Mel will have to be sent somewhere," she said. "I'm glad I reached Ellen Grimshaw. Mel mustn't ever know. You understand that, don't you?"

"Yes," I said.

"And, Sidney . . ."

"Yes?" I said.

"Will you call about a plane reservation, please . . . and it would be nice if I had an alarm clock."

CHAPTER 32

"Generals Are Human. I Know of None Immune to Error" — Omar N. Bradley

HEARD from Melville Goodwin exactly six . . . days later. In the meantime, the feature story on the General had appeared, a little late for the full news impact but still a good story. His face on the cover of the weekly appeared against the background of an American flag and in one corner was the crossed-rifles emblem of the Infantry. The lines about his eyes and mouth were exaggerated, but they made him appear heroic and watchful.

I had plenty of problems in the office at that time, what with hirings and firings and reconstruction. It was late November and Miss Jocelyn, my new secretary, had also brought up the subject of Christmas presents. I ought to give some sort of present to Dottie Peale, although I did not know on what basis we were at the moment. I would also have to give something to George Burtheimer, possibly a case of Scotch. Miss Maynard was no longer working for me, which was all the more reason why I should give her something handsome, and the same was true with Art Hertz. Also, there would have to be something for Gilbert Frary that would be a permanent monument to affection, something original and intimate, like a first edition of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

One night, just ten minutes before I was to go on the air, Miss Jocelyn told me that a General Melville A. Goodwin was on the telephone.

"Tell him to call at 7:20," I said.

Miss Jocelyn said she had suggested this already, but she had been told that it was a matter of extreme urgency.

I felt resentful, I remember, not only toward him but toward the whole system he represented. War always gave those people too much power. If they gave the word, they still expected you to snap into it with pleasure.

"Look here," he was saying as I picked up the phone, "I don't want any more of this run-around. I want to speak to Mr. Sidney Skelton."

"You're speaking to him," I answered, "but I've only got a minute, Mel."

"Say, Sid," he said, "where do you think I am?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Well, I'm right here at the Waldorf and I have a suite. The management gave it to me—no extra charge. Boy, that's what comes of getting a piece about you in the magazines."

"That's wonderful," I said, "but I've only got a minute, Mel."

"Well, drop everything and come up here, will you, Sid? Put this down — rooms 1583 and 4. It's important."

"I can't," I told him, "I'm going on the air in just eight minutes."

"Can't you get someone else to say your piece?"

"No," I said, "of course I can't, Mel."

There was a brief incredulous pause. "Well, how soon can you get up here?"

"Around half past seven," I said.

"Well, see you make it and don't keep me waiting," he said.

"Yes, sir," I said, and I accented the "sir" in a heavy way.

There was another pause that told me he had caught my meaning. "Now, now," he said, "what's the matter, son? Are you mad at me about anything?"

"No, sir," I said, and I elaborated the last word again in my sincerest tone, and then he laughed.

"Horsefeathers, boy," he said. "Well, make it 1930."

MEL GOODWIN's outer door was open a crack and he shouted to me to come in. He was standing in the center of a small impersonal sitting room. Something about his appearance puzzled me for a second — he was wearing one of his older uniforms, perhaps the same uniform that he had worn in Paris. It had the same used look, the same efficient neatness. Even the ribbons had a faded quality.

Something had changed in his manner, too. He looked careless and easy, almost as I remembered him at Saint-Lô.

"Well, hello, son," he said. "I'm damn glad to see you," and he did look glad. He gripped my hand hard and slapped me on the shoulder. "I called you up the first time I had a free minute. How're Helen and Camilla?"

"They're fine," I said, and then I found myself hesitating, because I did not know whether the ice was thin or thick.

"How's Muriel?" I asked. Not a line of his smile changed.

"Muriel's fine," he said. "She's busy as a bird dog. By the way, she had a swell time up at your house. She gave me a package to give you to give to Helen — a piece of Chinese embroidery."

"That's awfully kind of her," I said.

"I'll get it for you in a minute, but first we'd better have a drink. Call up room service, will you, Sid? I'll get the bottle."

He went in the other room and came back with a fifth of Scotch.

"There," he said. "Say, Sid, it's funny, isn't it, how we've got to be friends — close friends, I mean? You don't often make close friends after you've got the rank. As soon as I checked in here, I began saying to myself, I've got to see Sid before I push off."

"I didn't know you were pushing off, Mel," I said. "Where are you pushing to?"

I remembered Muriel Goodwin's pronouncement — Melville would have to be sent somewhere.

"Of course you haven't heard," he said. "I just keep thinking everybody ought to know. Listen, boy, they've asked for me at SCAP — right from the horse's mouth in Tokyo — and I hardly know anyone on the inside in SCAP. It's a damned tight little crowd. I'm flying out in two days and Goochy's coming over, too. Frizell is coming back. They've been riding him hard over there, but that part's confidential. It's going to be the beginning of a build-up and it's going to be with troops. Maybe it's going to be a corps command. I'm as happy as a kid. Congratulate the old man, will you, Sid?"

We shook hands formally, the way one should. I did not know what any of it meant, but I was thinking of Muriel Goodwin.

"Boy," he said, "I'm still slaphappy. I don't know where they may jump us next, but things don't look so good in China, do they? I've got a hunch it might happen in Korea."

It was the first time I had ever heard a serious mention of Korea.

A discreet knock cut off his flow of words sharply and there

was an instant's guilty pause. He had thought we were alone.

"Yes," he called, "who is it?" His voice had a new ring of authority. It was the room waiter, a timid-looking, middle-aged man, and I did not blame him for looking frightened.

"It's only me, sir," he said. "Do you wish me to open the soda bottles, sir?"

"All right, all right," Melville Goodwin answered, "open them."

We sat in frosty silence while the waiter opened the bottles, and Melville Goodwin glanced meaningly toward the suite entry.

"I've got to get over being careless," he said when the waiter left. "Sid, see that the outside door's locked, will you? Suppose we forget my last few remarks, just on general security principles—but if you knew what I know."

"Well, I don't," I told him. "It's all right."

He was pouring out the Scotch and putting ice in the glasses.

"Boy, I'll tell you this—it's just about time they had an activator in that setup, but picking me out ahead of all that South Pacific crowd . . . Of course, some fools might say it was a demotion after Plans, but not for me it isn't."

He sat down on the edge of an easy chair. He was lost in the glow of that unknown new assignment.

"Well, here's to you, Mel," I said. "Here's luck."

"Thanks," he said, "maybe I'll need it. You ought to have seen Goochy when he got the word, and you ought to have seen Muriel. She was just as surprised as I was. She's acting just the way she did when we started off for Bailey. You wouldn't have thought any of us were grown-up."

"I wish I could have seen her," I said.

Melville Goodwin shook the ice softly in his glass. "You know," he said, "it reminds me of that poem."

"You mean the one about Ulysses?" I asked.

"That's it," he said, "exactly. 'Push off and sitting well in order smite'—and it's a nice thing from Muriel's point of view.

There's quite a little dog connected with it. Confidentially, we're moving into Frizell's quarters. He has one of those houses in Tokyo that belonged to the Mitsuis—you know, with dwarf gardens and all the old servants in kimonos. Muriel's really going to get something, and maybe it's about time."

Melville Goodwin was safe again, safer than I would ever be in this changing world. There had been a stormy moment of maladjustment, but it was gone. He was off again, behaving exactly as he should, able to shed experience, but still some thought made him stare solemnly at his glass.

"You know," he said, "it's queer how a thing like this clarifies your thinking. I don't seem to be the same person I was before I got the word. I don't know what's been the matter with me lately." He looked at me with deceptive innocence. "You follow what I mean, don't you?"

"Yes," I said carefully, "I guess I do, partly."

I knew he was facing an awkward moment of confession. "All right," he said, "let's lay it on the line. Maybe I don't understand about women, Sid. Maybe I ought to have run around some when I was younger."

He looked at me curiously, but I did not answer.

"You always knew I was being a fool. I had never faced up to it, that's all—not that she isn't a nice girl. She's a very remarkable person."

"That's so," I answered, "she's remarkable."

"It's sort of rugged, isn't it," he said, "to go to someone and just say you've been a damn fool, but I like to think I tell the truth."

"You mean you've seen Dottie?" I asked.

"Sure," he said. "I saw Dottie at five this afternoon."

He set his drink on the table. "I don't know much about these things, but she was wonderful," he said. "She never let me feel for a minute that I was ducking out. In fact she made it all seem like something to be proud of. I'll never forget her, Sid."

He shook his glass slowly, watching the ice cubes carefully. "Of

course," he went on, "I took this up with Muriel last night, and she was wonderful. She said it was only decent to clear it as quickly as possible with Dottie. She even helped me plan what to say."

He was watching me, and he must have read something in my expression.

"You would have done that, wouldn't you," he asked, "if you had been in my shoes?"

"No," I said, "I don't believe I'd have had the guts."

He shook his head slowly. "That isn't guts," he said. "There are some things you have to lay on the line." He paused. "There's the flag, for instance."

"What?" I said.

"There's the flag," he said again, "and there's taking care of the men and never telling them to do anything that you won't do yourself." His eyes narrowed slightly. He could always see more than you thought he was going to. "You think I'm a pretty simple guy, don't you?"

"No, sir," I said, "I wouldn't call you simple."

"Well, it doesn't make a damn bit of difference," he said. "Say, Sid, do you know what I'd like to do tonight?"

"No," I answered.

"Well, it's just a whim," he said, and he looked at me doubtfully. "I don't know when we'll get the chance again. How about our staying here tonight and having a couple for the long road? Just because we've seen a lot together. Just because — well, there isn't any reason."

"Well, I don't mind," I said.

"Boy," he said, "I knew you'd be right with me." When he smiled, he looked like young Mel Goodwin from the Point.

"There used to be a bugler at Bailey," he was saying. "His last name was Lowther — funny that this should come back to me now. He was always getting into trouble, but he could really blow the calls. Even when he was in the pen, the Old Man used to order him out under guard to play taps. Boy, when you heard

that man do taps, it would hit you in the heels. It always eased you down and made everything clear. I remember what the Old Man said one night when taps was over—that was old Jupiter Jones. He was sitting on his veranda with a bottle of Old Home Elixir for his cough, when Lowther marched by on his way back to the pen—the guard behind him, bayonet and everything. The Old Man had a real sense of humor. . . .

“‘Lieutenant,’ he said to me, ‘go down, will you, and see that that bugler is locked in tight. I want him where you can get at him so he can blow taps over me when I die.’”

“It’s funny I should remember a thing like that, but you really should have heard him. . . . It really was the answer. . . . I sort of wish we had that damn bugler here now. . . .”



John P. Marquand



CRITICS have called Pulitzer Prize winner John P. Marquand “our leading contemporary novelist of manners” and “America’s foremost satirist.” Readers have accepted him just as enthusiastically. His novels — the best-known being *The Late George Apley*, *Wickford Point*, *H. M. Pulham, Esq.*, *So Little Time* and *Point of No Return* — have sold more than 3,000,000 copies, and many of his stories have been made into successful movies.

Marquand first met the military life he describes in *Melville Goodwin, U.S.A.* when he went overseas as an intelligence officer with the 77th Artillery in 1917. He saw severe action, including two gas attacks. In World War II he served as special consultant to the Secretary of War and did interpretative work on a Top Secret biological warfare project. As a correspondent, he traveled 50,000 miles through South America and Central Africa to Guam and Iwo Jima — where he arrived in time to be under fire again. He went out to the Pacific again in 1947 to write about the Army and Navy.

Marquand’s civilian career has included Harvard (where he majored in chemistry, simply because there happened to be a scholarship available), newspaper work, advertising, and a long and famous series of stories for *The Saturday Evening Post* — mostly about the little Japanese detective, Mr. Moto. He turned to more serious writing in 1937. Since then the publication of each new novel has been a literary event.

Illustrations by Henry Pitz

THE CRUEL SEA

A condensation from the book by

NICHOLAS MONSARRAT



"The Cruel Sea," copyright 1951 by Nicholas Monsarrat, is published at \$4 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 501 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.

FOR many weeks (as this is written) *The Caine Mutiny*, by Herman Wouk, and *The Cruel Sea*, by Nicholas Monsarrat, have topped fiction best-seller lists all over the country. Both great novels of naval warfare, they have a wholly different appeal. Last July the Condensed Book Club offered its readers *The Caine Mutiny*; now it presents a condensation of Parts Two and Three of *The Cruel Sea*.

Sometimes overlooked in the light of later, more spectacular Allied victories, the Battle of the North Atlantic was a proving ground for human courage unmatched in modern naval history. *The Cruel Sea* is the epic story of that North Atlantic war; of the gallant men of the corvette *Compass Rose*, who defied the worst that Germany's U-boats could do in order to keep supplies flowing to beleaguered Britain.

Compass Rose's many convoy runs condition her officers and crew for the double crisis which climaxes this condensation — a climax in which a heart-rending command decision is followed by an intense moment of personal triumph.

“Like *War and Peace*, *The Cruel Sea* deserves its own place in the literature that will endure.”

— Alice Dixon Bond in *Boston Herald*

“It is a magnificently true novel about the coolly reckless men who fought the Battle of the Atlantic, a tribute to Britons in their finest hour. . . .”

— Charles Poore in *Harper's Magazine*

WICE-ADMIRAL Sir Vincent Murray-Forbes sat at his desk in the operations building overlooking Liverpool harbor. He was writing one of hundreds of reports, on ships and men, that he was to write, month in and month out, until the end of the war: on ships destined to be sunk or to survive, on men marked for killing, or for honor at the King's own hands. He did not know what lay in store for these ships or these men. He was concerned only with facts; and of these he had mustered a great many, during the past three weeks.

"*HMS Compass Rose*," he wrote, in an old-fashioned, somewhat laborious longhand, "completed her program of training on February 2, 1940, and may be regarded as having passed out satisfactorily. The ship has been well worked up, and is clean and generally efficient. Further attention should be given (a) to fire fighting, which was below the requisite standard of speed, and (b) to the drill for Abandon Ship, which did not go smoothly on the only occasion on which it was tested. But with these reservations, the organization of *HMS Compass Rose* now meets the high standard necessary in the exacting task of convoy escort."

He consulted a batch of reports from his staff. "Gunnery," he wrote, as a subheading, and underlined it. "The single four-inch gun which is the sole major armament will only be adequate if constant attention is given to gun drill and to ammunition supply. *HMS Compass Rose* did well in her various gun trials, and the night shoot was successful.

"Asdics," he went on, and underlined again. "On her arrival, *HMS Compass Rose* was inadequately trained in this branch, and the Anti-Submarine Control Officer and the asdic ratings were clearly in need of intensive practice. When this had been provided, her efficiency improved rapidly, and she developed an effective anti-submarine team.

"Depth-Charge Organization," he wrote. "Only constant practice will bring the depth-charge crews up to the high standard of efficiency necessary in this branch. Time-tests of reloading and firing were generally disappointing, and it is emphasized that speed and accuracy may be vital here when the ship is in action."

He added three short subheadings: "Engine-Room Branch: satisfactory." "Telegraphy and Coding: adequate." "Signal Branch: excellent." Then he took a fresh sheet of paper.

"*HMS Compass Rose*: Reports on Officers," wrote the Admiral, and referred again to his notes. "Lieutenant Commander George Eastwood Ericson, RNR: Commanding Officer. This officer exhibited a high standard of seamanship, and showed himself expert at shiphandling. I judged him to be a conscientious and determined officer who, when he has gained more experience in this new class of ship, will extract everything possible out of his command. His relations with his subordinate officers appeared satisfactory, and it was clear that he would be followed by them without hesitation.

"Lieutenant James Bennett, RANVR: First Lieutenant and Anti-Submarine Control Officer," wrote the Admiral. "This officer has a remarkable self-confidence, and with more experience and application his executive capacity may come to match it. In the initial stages there were serious flaws in the internal organization of *HMS Compass Rose*, doubtless due to this officer's inexperience. A downright, forceful personality who should make a good First Lieutenant when he learns to set an example of self-discipline.

"Sub-Lieutenant Keith Laing Lockhart, RNVR: Gunnery and Navigation Officer," wrote the Admiral. "I was impressed by this officer's competence, in novel surroundings and in a position of responsibility, when backed by very little practical experience. His gun's crews were well worked up, and he seemed to inspire confidence in the ratings in his division. He should develop into a good officer. He should pay more attention to the regulations governing dress for officers when on duty.

"Sub-Lieutenant Gordon Percival D'Ewes Ferraby, RNVR: Depth-Charge Control and Correspondence Officer," wrote the Admiral. "This officer lacks both experience and self-confidence, and appeared hesitant in giving orders. There is no reason why he should not develop into a useful officer, but he must learn to trust his own judgment, and to give the ratings under his charge the impression that he knows what he wants from them. His department improved during the latter stages of *HMS Compass Rose's* course of training."

The Admiral drew a thick line under his report and blotted it neatly.

Then he added, at the bottom: "Addressed, Commander in Chief, Western Approaches. Copies to Flag-Officer-in-Charge, Glasgow; Admiralty (C. W. Branch); *HMS Compass Rose*." Then he sat back, and rang for his secretary.

ERICSON, at ease in his cabin, read his copy of this report with some satisfaction and a good deal of amusement. He liked especially the crack about Lockhart and "dress regulations"—Lockhart having mislaid his cap on one crucial occasion and greeted the Admiral with something between a wave and a bow. Then, as he folded the sheets of paper again, there was a knock on the door, and Leading Signaman Wells came in, a sealed envelope in his hand.

"Secret signal, sir," said Wells, in not quite his normal inexpressive voice. "The signal boat just brought it aboard."

Ericson ripped open the envelope, and read slowly and carefully. It was what he had been waiting for.

"Being in all respects ready for sea," said the pink slip, "*HMS Compass Rose* will sail to join convoy AK14, leaving Liverpool (Bar Light Vessel) at 1200A 6th February, 1940. Senior officer of escort is in *HMS Viperous*. Acknowledge."

Ericson read it through again. Then:

"Take this down," he said. "To Commander in Chief, Western

Approaches, from *Compass Rose*. Your 0939 stroke four stroke two acknowledged.' And send it off straight away."

So they went to war.

THE WAR to which they went had hardly settled down, even in broad outline, to any recognizable pattern.

The liner *Athenia* had been torpedoed and sunk, with the loss of 128 lives, on September 3, the first day of the war; the first U-boat sinking, to offset this ruthless stroke, was on September 14. Thus, at the beginning, the pace was hot — 40 ships were sunk during that first September, and two fine warships, *Courageous* and *Royal Oak*, both went to the bottom before the turn of the year; but the pace did not last. The casualties had been mostly independent ships that, like the *Athenia*, were in the wrong place at the wrong time; but with the convoy system this chance ill fortune could be avoided, and ships and shipping companies were quick to see that any effort to remain in convoy was worth while.

The U-boats were on the offensive — that was their role — but it was not a coördinated attack, nor even a very efficient one. Probably there were not more than a dozen of them at sea at any one time during this stage of the war, and so they hunted alone. They hung about off the coasts of Scotland and Ireland, and in the Bay of Biscay, on the lookout for stray ships that they could pick off at leisure; it was a series of individual forays — sometimes successful, sometimes a waste of time: the coördination and control were to come later, and in the meantime the whole thing was unpredictable and rather amateurish. Britain was short of escorts, Germany was short of U-boats: the Atlantic was a very big ocean and, in winter weather, the finest hiding place in the world. It was indeed like a game of hide-and-seek, played by a few children in an enormous rambling garden.

Such was the Atlantic battlefield, when 1940 dawned. The danger was there, but the two sides were hardly engaged: the U-boats lurking always, but playing their luck instead of their skill. To

join this untidy battle, *Compass Rose* sailed early in the year.

The sun was out as they steamed down into Liverpool Bay, on that fine February morning, to meet their convoy. Five miles ahead of them their ships were coming out; they were led by a destroyer—an old V and W Class, which must be *Viperous*—already giving them the “interrogative” on her signal lamp.

While Leading Signalmán Wells was replying, first making *Compass Rose's* number and then taking down a long signal about the organization of the convoy, Ericson studied the line of ships coming toward them. They were of all shapes and sizes: tankers, big freighters, small ships that would surely have been better off in the coasting trade than trying the hazards of an Atlantic passage. Some were deep-laden, some were in ballast and uncomfortably high out of the water: they steamed in single file from the narrow Mersey channel: their pennants flew bravely in the sunshine, they seemed almost glad to be putting to sea again. . . . That could hardly be true, thought Ericson with a smile, remembering the tearful good-byes, the hangovers, the feeling of “Oh-God-here-we-go-again” that attended every sailing; but there was something about the file of ships—46 of them—that suggested a willingness to make the voyage, a tough confidence in the future.

Sub-Lieutenant Ferraby, hanging about at the back of the bridge (it was not his watch), was more stirred by the sight of those ships than he had ever been before. He liked everything about this convoy: he liked its air of purpose as it cracked on speed after the cautious passage down-channel: he liked individual ships—particularly the tough and shapely tankers: he liked the men on board who waved cheerfully to *Compass Rose* as she passed down the line toward the tail of the convoy. This sort of thing—this sea-brotherhood—was what he had had in mind when he volunteered for corvettes: there had been times when it had seemed impossible of attainment, when he was convinced that he was going to be fobbed off with a third-rate drama of pretense and frustration: now he knew that all his wishes were coming true.

Here were the ships, assembling for their long uncertain voyage: here was *Compass Rose*, appointed to guard them: here was Ferraby himself, a watchkeeping officer—or practically so—charged specifically with a share of that guardianship. His pale face flushed, his expression set in a new mold of determination, Ferraby surveyed the convoy with pride and a feeling of absolute proprietorship. *Our ships*, he thought: *our cargos, our men* . . .

Ferraby was only 20, he'd been commissioned for exactly 11 weeks. His eyes were new, and took a good deal on trust: other eyes—Ericson's among them—were not new, and to them the convoy was somewhat more impressive than the escort, which reflected perfectly the pinched circumstances of the Royal Navy at this stage. To shepherd these 46 ships through waters that were potentially the most treacherous in the world, there had been provided one 15-year-old destroyer, of a class that, though valiantly manned and valiantly driven, was really far too slight for the Atlantic weather: two corvettes—one, a prewar edition of crude design, the other, *Compass Rose*; a trawler; and a rescue tug that already, in the sheltered waters of Liverpool Bay, was bouncing about like a pea on a drum. Five warships—four and a half would be nearer the truth—to guard 46 slow merchantmen was not a reassuring prospect. But there it was: the best that could be done.

That first night with the convoy was a restless affair that gave them very little sleep. They were still organized on a two-watch basis—that is, the Captain and Ferraby alternated with Bennett and Lockhart, four hours on and four hours off. It was a trying arrangement at the best of times, hard on the endurance and the temper: even if they could fall asleep as soon as they came off watch, they had to wake and dress and climb up to the bridge again almost before they had turned over. But this was not the best of times. The wind was rising, and the Irish Sea with it: the ship responded to the movement with a deplorable readiness. In the noisy turmoil between-decks, sleep was barely possible, even to men already dog-tired.

The second day, as a final introduction to their appointed job, U-boats were reported in the area immediately ahead. They never met those U-boats, which were doubtless thankful enough to stay submerged and escape the fury of the weather; for it was the weather that was the most violent enemy of all. For eight days they steamed straight into a westerly gale: 500 miles at a grindingly slow pace, buffeting through a weight of wind that seemed to have a personal spite in every blow it dealt. The convoy was dispersed over more than 50 square miles: the escorts were out of touch most of the time: it was impossible to establish any sort of "convoy speed" because they were no longer a composite body, just a lot of ships making the best they could of the vile Atlantic weather. The big ships in the van slowed down and tried to preserve some sort of order; but the smaller ones still straggled away behind, virtually heaving to at the height of the gale and often having to steer many degrees off their true course, simply in order not to batter themselves to pieces. But eventually they reached the point in mid-Atlantic which was considered a safe dispersal area. The U-boats had not yet extended their operations further westward. On the eighth day, *Viperous*, which had had a very bad time and had lost two men overboard, signaled: "Convoy disperse — proceed independently": in the circumstances, the signal had an irony that they were scarcely in the mood to enjoy.

The escorts collected: *Viperous* with damage to her bridge and superstructure, the old corvette minus one of her boats, *Compass Rose* intact but rolling villainously, the trawler riding well, the tug tossing with a ludicrous, almost hysterical violence as she tried to keep pace. They had a rendezvous with the incoming convoy, bound for England, and they found it — somehow: in that wilderness of wind and rain they found the pinpoint in mid-Atlantic that brought them up with the ships they were waiting for.

They turned for home, with the new convoy of 30-odd ships that, in the better weather to the westward, had managed to preserve a reasonable formation. But now, with the fierce wind be-

hind them, it was more uncomfortable still. Aboard *Compass Rose*, conditions were indescribable. She rolled furiously, with a tireless malice allowing of no rest for anyone. Cooking was impossible: the staple diet was tea and corned beef, at breakfast, lunch and dinner, for nearly a fortnight on end. Everything was wet through: some water had come down a ventilator and flooded the wardroom: forward, the mess decks were a crowded hell of saturated clothes, spare gear washing about round their feet, food overturned — and all the time the noise, the groaning slamming violence of a small ship fighting a monstrous sea.

BENNETT, disliking the experience they were all sharing, complained with an ill temper colored by a real uneasiness: the rotten ship, the lousy convoy, the bloody awful weather — these were the sinews of an unending dirge that was really grounded in fear. He knew enough about ships to see that *Compass Rose* was going through a desperate ordeal, but not enough to realize that she was built to survive it, and would do so.

He should have done something about getting the mess cleared up in the fo'c'sle, but he couldn't be bothered. He should somehow have organized at least one hot meal a day, even if it were only warmed-up tinned beans: the galley fire was unusable, but with a little ingenuity it could have been done in the engine room. Instead, he sulked and shirked, and secretly longed to be out of it.

Not much more of this for him, he decided: there were other ways of winning the war. . . . It was all so tiring, too: if he hadn't been able to hand the watch over to Lockhart and get 40 winks now and again, he'd have been out on his feet.

Lockhart was desperately tired, and rather numbed, for nearly all that voyage. His thin wiry body was not built to withstand the cold: every nerve under his skin was crying out for sleep, and bitter cold and wakefulness were all that the present offered. Bennett might shirk his watch, spending most of it inside the asdic shelter: he himself could not do so. Four hours on, and four off, for 17



days at a stretch — that was his share: and the hours “on” were an unending strain, trying his eyes and his tired body to the limit.

There was one night he remembered especially, toward the end of the trip, when the gale was at its height. With Bennett dozing inside, Lockhart was clinging to the rail in one corner of the bridge, staring through misted binoculars at the single merchant ship on which he was keeping station. He was wet through and cold to the bone: his feet inside the sodden sea boots squelched icily whenever he moved: from the pinched skin of his face the water ran down, riming his eyes and lips with salt. He felt little resentment against Bennett, who should really be doing this job: he had a general disgust that someone nominally his senior should be content to evade responsibility at a moment like this, but he

was really feeling too remote from personalities to care. For him, the world had resolved itself into a storm, and a small blur to leeward of *Compass Rose*: the blur was a ship that he must not lose, and so, for hour after hour, he nursed *Compass Rose* in her station, altering the engine revolutions, edging over when the blur faded, and away again when it loomed too large.

He was roused at one point from this tremendous concentration by someone nudging him in the darkness.

"Who is it?" he asked. It could hardly be Bennett.

"Coxswain, sir," said a voice.

"Hallo, coxswain! Come to see the fun?"

"Just for a bit of air, sir."

They both had to shout: the wind caught the words on their very lips and whipped them away into the night.

"I brought a mug of tea up, sir," Tallow went on. And as Lockhart took it gratefully, he added: "It's got a tot in it."

Tea and rum . . . When Lockhart bent down to shelter behind the rail, and took a sip, it ran through him like fire: it was the finest drink he had ever tasted. He was oddly moved that Tallow should have taken the trouble to make tea at two o'clock in the morning, add a tot of his own rum, and negotiate the difficult climb up to the bridge with it. He could not see Tallow's face, but he divined a sympathy in his manner that was nearly as warming as the drink.

"Thanks, coxswain," he said when he had finished it. "I needed that." He raised his binoculars, confirmed that *Compass Rose* was still in station, and relaxed slightly. "What's it like below?"

"Terrible, sir. Couldn't be worse. It'll take us a week to get straight, after this lot."

"Not much longer," said Lockhart, though he did not feel that very acutely. "Two or three days, and we'll be in shelter."

"Can't be soon enough for me, sir. Proper uproar, this is. A lot of the lads wish they'd joined the army instead."

They talked till the end of the watch, shouting at each other

against the storm. Lockhart was glad of the company: it was a tiny spark of warmth and feeling in a furious and inhuman onslaught. They would need a lot of that, if the Atlantic were going to serve them like this in the future.

PHYSICALLY, Ferraby was in a worse way than any of them. He had been acutely seasick during most of the voyage, but he never gave in to it: always, when it was time for him to go on watch, he would drag himself up the ladder, his face the color of a dirty handkerchief, and somehow last out the four hours on the bridge. Then he would stumble below again, and force himself to eat, and be sick once more, and lie down on his bunk in the stuffy heaving cabin. Toward the end, the strain nearly proved too much for him. He was very weak, and without any will except to last out this watch, and the next one, and a few more until they made harbor. Once, he stopped halfway up the ladder, and found himself crying. "Mavis," he said — and went on, as if his wife had answered him from somewhere up above.

He bore his ordeal alone, bravely: his set white face invited nothing save the kindness of ignoring it. He did not give in, because to fail to go on watch, to confess his defeat would have been worse than any seasickness, any fatigue, any wind or rain or fury. There was no way out that was not shameful; and that was no way out.

THE Captain carried them all.

For him, there was no fixed watch, no time set aside when he was free to relax and, if he could, to sleep. He had to control everything, to drive the whole ship himself: he had to act on signals, to fix their position, to keep his section of the convoy together, to use his seamanship to ease *Compass Rose's* ordeal as much as possible. He was a tower of strength, holding everything together by sheer unrelenting guts. The sight of the tall tough figure hunched in one corner of the bridge now seemed essential

to them all: they needed the tremendous reassurance of his presence, and so he gave it unstintingly, even though the hours without sleep mounted to a fantastic total.

He was tired—he could not remember ever having been so tired—but he knew that he was not too tired: there were always reserves. . . . It was part of the job of being captain, the reverse side of the prestige and the respect and the saluting: the tiny ship, the inexperienced officers, the unbelievable weather—he had taken these on as well, and they would not defeat him. So he dealt with everything that came, assuming all cares out of an overflowing strength: he was a professional—the only one among amateurs who might in the future become considerable assets to him but at the moment were not very much help—and the professional job, at sea, was not without its rewarding pride. It had to be done: he was the man to do it. *Compass Rose*, butting her patient way homeward under the blows of the cruel sea, was lucky to have him.

No voyage can last forever, save for ships that are sunk. There came an afternoon—the afternoon of the 16th day—when the horizon ahead was not level, but uneven: the foothills of Scotland came up suddenly, beckoning them onward. Their rolling lessened as they came under the lee of the northern coast line: presently, toward dusk, they were in shelter, and running down toward the home port that promised them rest and peace at last. It was difficult to realize that the worst was over, and that *Compass Rose*, on a steady keel, could become warm and dry again.

So the first convoy ended. It had been a shock—the more so because of the doubt, in the background, as to how they would fare in action with U-boats, if action were added to so startling an ordeal. But they did not think of this straightaway: that night, tied up alongside the oiler after 17 days of strain, they were all so utterly exhausted that a dead and dreamless sleep was all they were fit for.

As soon as they got in, Ericson applied for another officer to be appointed to the ship; it was clear that there was far too much

work for a first lieutenant and two subs to handle. He presented a good case, arguing the matter first with a faintly supercilious staff officer who seemed to think that corvettes were some kind of local defense vessel, and then incorporating his arguments in a formal submission to the Admiralty: it must have been an effective document, since their Lordships acted on it within three weeks. Sub-Lieutenant Morell, they said, was appointed to *Compass Rose*, "additional for watchkeeping duties."

Morell arrived, fresh from the training establishment, accompanied by an astonishing amount of luggage: he was a very proper young man, so correct and so assured that it appeared fantastic for him to grace anything as crude as a corvette. Lockhart, indeed, could only imagine him in black coat and pin-stripe trousers, moving from his chambers in Lincoln's Inn to a sedate lunch party at the Savoy, or later, impeccably tail-coated, squiring the least impulsive of the season's debutantes to Ciro's or the Embassy. He was grave, slow-moving, and exceedingly courteous.

He and Bennett could hardly be expected to mix. Bennett had formed a strong attachment for the crudest item in the wardroom store-cupboard, tinned sausages, which he knew colloquially as "snorkers." He saluted their almost daily appearance on the menu with the recurrent exclamation: "Snorkers! Good-oh!"

On the first evening, at dinner, Morell watched, with an expression of disbelief that Lockhart found ludicrous, as Bennett greeted the tinned sausages, tucked his napkin under his chin and fell to on this deplorable dish. Morell offered no comment, but later, when he and Lockhart were alone, he remarked: "I understand the first lieutenant comes from one of the Dominions," with an absence of expression that was itself the best substitute for it.

"Australia," answered Lockhart, himself noncommittal.

"Ah . . . I have met one or two Australians—usually the victims of confidence tricksters."

"It's amazing how people still fall for that sort of thing."

"It is not amazing," said Morell, after reflection. "But it is, at

least, continually strange. . . . Do we often have tinned sausages for dinner, by the way?"

"Very often."

"Whether this war is long or short," said Morell, after reflecting again, "it is going to *seem* long."

Lockhart laughed. He was glad that Morell had joined them: he promised to enliven the wardroom, though with little intention of so doing, and it could do with all the enlivenment possible.

THE FIRST few convoys followed the pattern of their initiation. They still worked with *Viperous* as leader of the group, which had been strengthened by the addition of *Sorrel*, a corvette of their class which, in the months ahead, was to become their closest friend and rival. They were still, as a fighting escort, untried by the enemy. There were submarines about — other convoys kept running into them — but so far their luck had held: the log recorded no shot in anger, only a succession of comments on the weather. This, at least, continued to put *Compass Rose* to the test: whatever the season, it seemed that the Atlantic could never wholly abandon its mood of violence.

But the longer days of spring and early summer did, in fact, afford them some relief: watchkeeping by day was certainly less of a strain, whatever antics the ship was going through. They were now divided into three watches, four hours on duty and eight off: Bennett and Lockhart were both on their own, and Morell and Ferraby shared the third watch together. Under the new arrangements Ericson could now sleep much of the day and be available, comparatively rested, during the night. Of his watchkeeping officers, he found that Bennett was all right as long as nothing unexpected happened: that Lockhart was completely trustworthy, and not afraid to call him in good time to deal with any crisis: and that Morell and Ferraby, between them, added up to something like a dependable pair of hands and eyes. He could hardly expect more, from this cheerfully amateur collection.

But the nights were still a strain and a challenge to them all, whether the enemy were near or far. The current orders were that escorts were to zigzag, to lessen the chance of being hit; it was a sensible precaution, but a zigzag on a pitchblack night, with 30 ships in close contact adding the risk of collision to the difficulty of hanging on to the convoy, was something more than a few lines in a Fleet Order. Lockhart, who now kept a permanent middle watch—midnight to 4 a.m.—evolved his own method. He took *Compass Rose* out obliquely from the convoy, for a set number of minutes: very soon, of course, he could not see the other ships, but that was part of the maneuver. Then he turned, and ran back the same number of minutes on the corresponding course inward: at the end, he should be in touch with the convoy again. Once, the Captain had come up, when they were at the very limit of the outward leg and out of touch with the convoy, and had looked about him as if he could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Where are they, Lockhart?" he asked with a certain grimness.

Lockhart pointed. "There, sir . . . We're on the outer zigzag," he added, to justify a blank horizon. "We'll meet them again in seven minutes."

Ericson grunted. It was not a reassuring sound, and Lockhart, counting the minutes, wondered what on earth he was going to say if this time *Compass Rose* never met the convoy. When at last the ships came up again, black and solid, he had a surge of relief that he felt the Captain was aware of.

"Check your course each time you alter," Ericson said curtly. "Don't leave it to the quartermaster—he might make a mistake." Then he walked off the bridge. That was what Lockhart liked about the Captain: if he trusted you, he showed it—he didn't fiddle about in the background, pretending to do something else, and all the time watching you like a nursemaid. And he was quite entitled to be worried, and to ask questions when he felt like it: if they did lose the convoy, it was, officially, the Captain's fault.

What Lockhart found especially annoying was handing over his watch to Bennett. By tradition, the First Lieutenant had the morning watch — four a.m. to eight: Bennett followed the custom as far as the actual time went, but in other respects he scarcely justified his position. It was mortifying to cling onto the convoy all through the middle watch, keeping exact station and a fast, accurate zigzag, and hand over *Compass Rose* in a pinpoint position at the end of it, and then to hear, as he left the bridge, Bennett saying: "Signalman! See that ship there? Tell me if we start to lose her," and then settling down inside the asdic hut.

At this stage — still unwarlike, still a tame apprenticeship — they found hardest to bear the monotony of rolling, with, as an occasional variant, the shuddering crunch with which *Compass Rose* greeted a head sea. It was tremendously exhausting, this never being able to rest without something going wrong. They were always being hurt, in spite of a continual watchfulness: doorways hit them as they were leaving their cabins: they were thrown out of their bunks as soon as sleep relaxed their tense care. Often they had to eat their meals with the food slopping into their laps, and the furniture creaking and sliding and occasionally hurtling across the room. There was a damnable rhythm about the movement: they could not escape it: it was an inherent element in going to sea in corvettes. Sometimes, up on the bridge, they would watch *Sorrel* being chucked about like a cork, and the spray going over as she punched her way through a rough sea, and they would think how tough she looked, and what a pretty picture, handsome and determined, she made. It was a pity that the reality, in *Sorrel* as in *Compass Rose*, was so infinitely unpleasant.

They found, on all their convoys, that the food soon became intolerably coarse and dull. *Compass Rose* carried enough fresh meat, bread and vegetables for five days: after that, their diet was the same dreary procession of tinned sausages, tinned stew, hard biscuit and tea. (The tinned stew came in an ornate container labeled "Old Mother Jameson's Farm House Dinner." Said Morell,

surveying the dubious mixture on his plate: "I must remember *never* to go to dinner at Mrs. Jameson's.") It was enough to support life, and that was all one could say about it.

They found, all the same, that there were times when they could still relax—that some moments at sea were enchanting. Some nights, especially, had a peaceful loveliness that repaid a hundred hours of strain. Sometimes, in sheltered water, when the moon was full, they moved with the convoy past hills outlined against the pricking stars: slipping under the very shadow of these cliffs, their keel divided the phosphorescent water into a gleaming wake that curled away till it was caught and held in the track of the moon. Then Morell and Ferraby would talk idly of their homes, or Lockhart and Leading Signalmen Wells, sharing a later watch, would make it go swiftly in reminiscence and conjecture. These magic nights, unmarred by fatigue or any alarm, were few: when they were granted, their sweetness remained long afterward. Once or twice Ericson, coming up to the bridge in the early hours of the morning, would find the whole ship so peaceful and so softly lapped by darkness that it was hard to recall the purpose of their voyage. *Compass Rose*, afloat on a calm sea, seemed to shed every attribute save a gentle assurance of refuge.

They found, above all, that one part of every trip could be actively enjoyed: the last day of it, when they were in sheltered water and getting ready for their return to harbor. Now was the time when, running down the Irish Sea and making the last turn for home, they set to work to tidy up the ship after the chaos of the voyage: portholes were opened to the cleansing breeze, wet clothes stripped off and hung out to dry, the furniture and the tables and stools in the mess decks released from their lashings and set out properly. The sun gleamed on the saturated decks, and dried them off swiftly, leaving a rime of salt: round the bows, the porpoises and the sea gulls played, crossing and recrossing their pathway as if clearing a way of welcome for them.

The convoy began the last mile of its journey, upriver to the

docks: deep-laden, crammed to the decks with cargo, immensely worth while, it struck a note of thankful pride as it was safely delivered. The escort parted, steaming in single file past their charges and further upriver. For them, at last, here was their haven: peace alongside the oiler, the mail coming aboard, hot baths, clean clothes, rest and sleep after many days and nights had denied them all these things.

SUDDENLY it was time for their first spell of leave: six days, for half the ship's company and all the officers save one, Lockhart, who was assigned to stay aboard while *Compass Rose* had her boilers cleaned and a few small repairs carried out. It was their first break since the ship was commissioned, five months previously; they felt that they had earned it, and Ericson, while not encouraging them in this view, privately admitted that they were right.

On the evening of their return, Lockhart, Morell and Ferraby were all in the wardroom when Bennett stumbled down the ladder and entered the room. He was undeniably drunk. For some moments he busied himself at the sideboard, while they watched him in silence; then he turned round, glass in hand, and focused his eyes on each of them in turn.

"Well, well, well," he said with foolish emphasis. "Good little boys, all back from leave at the proper time. . . . How did you tear yourselves away?"

No one answered him.

The full glass slopped over his coat as he gestured drunkenly. "Matey lot, aren't you?" He eyed Lockhart with confused belligerence. "What's been happening while I've been away?"

"Nothing at all."

"I suppose you were slipping ashore the whole time." He took an enormous gulp of whisky, coughed, and only just held on to it. His eyes moved unsteadily round to Morell and Ferraby. "And as for you married men — married —" he lost the thread of what he was going to say, then suddenly lurched out of the

room. They heard him stumbling up the ladder, and the clang of the lavatory door behind him.

"What a monstrous man he is!" Morell said in the uncomfortable pause that followed. "How can we get rid of him?"

"I've an idea he might get rid of himself," answered Lockhart. "He didn't like our last convoy at all. I wouldn't be surprised if he gave this job up."

"How could he do that?" asked Ferraby, in a voice so subdued and spiritless that it was almost a whisper.

Lockhart gestured vaguely. "Oh, there are ways. . . . If I were he, I think I should claim a duodenal ulcer. For some reason the navy takes them very seriously—if they suspect anything like that they put you ashore straight away, in case something blows up while you're at sea."

"How wonderful if he did go," said Ferraby, in the same small voice. "It would make such a terrific difference."

"Funnier things have happened."

"But not nicer," said Morell. "Not in my experience, at least."

By one of those coincidences that occasionally sweeten the cruellest circumstances, Lockhart's forecast came exactly true. Bennett complained of pain all the following afternoon: he went off to the naval hospital the same evening, and he did not return. When Ericson summoned Lockhart to his cabin next morning, he had on his desk two signals that did not go well together. One was their sailing orders, for four o'clock: the other was about Bennett.

"The First Lieutenant won't be back for some time, Lockhart," Ericson began. "He's got a suspected duodenal ulcer."

"Oh," said Lockhart. He felt inclined to laugh, at the way it had all fallen into place so neatly, and then he had a thought which brought him up sharply. Something else was falling into place, something that concerned him intimately. He waited for the Captain to speak, knowing what he was going to say, almost fearing to hear it in case it should be less than he hoped.

Ericson was frowning at the two signals. "We sail this after-

noon, and we'll have to go without him. There's no chance of getting a relief by then, either." He looked up. "You'll have to take over as Number One, and organize the watches on that basis."

"Yes, sir," said Lockhart. His heart had raced for a moment, as if to mark a violent pleasure. First Lieutenant . . . It could be done, and it would have to be — he wouldn't have another chance like this one, for a very long time.

"I'll help you with it," Ericson went on. "You should be able to carry on until a relief arrives."

"I can carry on anyway."

"Can you?" Ericson looked at him again. Lockhart had spoken with a kind of informal resolution that was a new thing in their relationship.

"Yes, sir."

"All right," said Ericson after a pause. "I'll see. . . . Do your best this time anyway."

Lockhart left the cabin with that precise determination.

THE NEW JOB was a challenge, and Lockhart took it on happily. As far as watchkeeping was concerned, it gave him an easier run: he now had the morning watch, from four a.m. until eight, and in this early part of the summer that meant almost four hours of daylight watchkeeping, instead of the strain and difficulty of a totally dark middle watch. But there were many other things that went with his promotion, added responsibilities that must always be borne in mind. He did not mind, because he was professionally and personally interested, as well as immensely eager to make a success of it; but on that convoy, as on many others still to come, he worked harder than he ever had before.

In essence, he had to present the Captain with a going concern, a smoothly run ship that would not fail him in any trial. He was strengthened by Ericson's backing, which was strong and continuous, and pleased also by the reaction of Morell and Ferraby. They gave him a cheerful coöperation: freed from Bennett's heavy-

handed regime, they went out of their way to help him through the first uncertain period.

For they *were* free of Bennett: he faded away into a background of hospital boards and recurrent examinations, and they never saw him again. Lockhart's promotion was confirmed, not without some misgivings, by Western Approaches Command; and the new officer who arrived to fill the gap, one Sub-Lieutenant Baker, was junior to Ferraby. The new team assembled and settled down, making of *Compass Rose* a different ship altogether. The wardroom was now a pleasant place where they could relax and feel at ease, without a morose and critical eye singling them out for comment: after six months of suspicion and the most oafish kind of tyranny, it made for a happy freedom that they did not want to abuse. The same feeling spread throughout the ship, filtering down to the lower deck, where Bennett's crude methods had aroused the strongest reaction in terms of idling and shirking: the idea that Lockhart, though no fool, was a better man to work for, produced, as it often does, more work and not less.

Ericson, observing the general improvement, was pleased with his experiment. He had gone to a good deal of trouble to get Lockhart's appointment confirmed, and the trouble was worth while. Both he and *Compass Rose* had gained something that might be even more valuable in the near future.

THERE was only one job of Lockhart's that, in moments of introspection, he wanted to relinquish, and that was the job of ship's doctor. "Fainting at the sight of blood" — the stock phrase sometimes occurred to him, with a discomfiting twinge of anxiety. Suppose that was what happened, suppose he could not help it. So far the job had involved him in nothing more than treating toothache, removing a splinter from a man's eye, and advising on a stubborn case of lice-infestation.

And then, suddenly, being the doctor was a serious matter.

Dunkirk, that fabulous flight and triumph, was their signal

for joining battle: from then onward, almost every convoy they escorted suffered some sort of attack. Dunkirk made a great difference to the balance of things in the Atlantic: the operation itself drew off many ships, destroyers and corvettes alike, from regular convoy-escort, and some of them were lost, others damaged, and still others had to remain in home waters when it was over, to be on hand in case of invasion.

There was another factor in the altered account. The map now showed them a melancholy and menacing picture: with Norway gone, France and the Low Countries gone, Ireland a dubious quantity on their doorstep, and Spain an equivocal neutral, nearly the whole European coast line, from Narvik to Bordeaux, was available to U-boats and, more important still, as air bases for long-range aircraft. Aircraft could now trail a convoy far out into the Atlantic, calling up U-boats to the attack as they circled out of range: the liaison quickly showed a profit disastrous to the Allies. In the three months that followed Dunkirk, over 200 ships were sent to the bottom by these two weapons in combinations, and the losses continued at something like 50 ships a month till the end of the year. Help was on the way—new weapons, more escorts, more aircraft: but help did not come in time for many ships and men, and for many convoys that made port with great gaps in their ranks.

It was on one of these bad convoys, homeward bound near Iceland, that *Compass Rose* was blooded.

WHEN the alarm bell went, just before midnight, Ferraby left the bridge where he had been keeping the first watch with Baker, and made his way aft toward his station at the depth-charge rack. It was he who had rung the bell, as soon as the noise of aircraft and a burst of tracer bullets from the far side of the convoy indicated an attack; but though he had been prepared for the violent clanging and the drumming of feet that followed it, he could not control a feeling of sick surprise at the urgency that now possessed

the ship. The night was calm, with a bright three-quarter moon that bathed the upper deck in a cold glow, and showed them the nearest ships of the convoy in hard revealing outline.

The attacking aircraft, now flying low over the center of the convoy, was pursued and harried by gunfire from scores of ships at once. The uproar was prodigious—the plane screaming through the darkness, hundreds of guns going at once, one or two ships sounding the alarm on their sirens: the center of the convoy, with everyone blazing away at the low-flying plane and not worrying about what else was in the line of fire, must have been an inferno. Standing in their groups aft, close to the hurrying water, they watched and waited, wondering which way the plane would turn at the end of her run: on the platform above them the two-pounder gun's crew, motionless and helmeted against the night sky, were keyed ready for their chance to fire. But the chance never came, the waiting belts of ammunition remained idle: something else forestalled them.

Near the end of her run, the aircraft dropped two bombs: one of them fell wide, raising a huge pluming spout of water that glittered in the moonlight, and the other found its mark. It dropped with an iron clang on a ship they could not see—and they knew that now they would never see her: for after the first explosion there was a second one, a huge orange flash that lit the whole convoy and the whole sky at one ghastly stroke. The ship must have disintegrated on the instant; they were left with the evidence—the sickening succession of splashes as the torn pieces of the ship fell back into the sea, covering and fouling a mile-wide circle, and the noise of the aircraft disappearing into the darkness, a receding tail of sound to underline this destruction.

"Must have been ammunition," said someone in the darkness, breaking the awed and compassionate silence. "Poor devils."

"Didn't know much about it. Best way to die."

"You fool," thought Ferraby, trembling uncontrollably, "you fool, you fool, no one wants to die. . . ."

From the higher vantage point of the bridge, Ericson had watched everything. In the shocked silence that followed, his voice giving a routine helm order was cool and normal: no one could have guessed the sadness and the anger that filled him, to see a whole crew of men like himself wiped out at one stroke. Even as he raised his binoculars to look at the convoy again, the ship they were focused on, a hundred yards away, rocked to a sudden explosion and then, on the instant, heeled over at a desperate angle.

This time, a torpedo . . . Ericson heard it: and even as he jumped to the voice pipe to increase their speed and start zig-zagging, he thought: "If that one came from this side of the convoy, it must have missed us by a few feet." Inside the asdic hut, Lockhart heard it, and started hunting for the U-boat on the danger side, without further orders. Morell, on the fo'c'sle, heard it, and ordered his gun's crew to load with star shell: down in the wheelhouse, Tallow heard it, and gripped the wheel tighter, and called out to his quartermasters: "Watch that telegraph, now!" and waited for the swift orders that might follow. Right aft, by the depth charges, Ferraby heard it, and shivered: he glanced downward at the black water rushing past them, and then at the stricken ship, which he could see quite clearly, and he longed for some action in which he could lose himself and his fear. Deep down in the engine room, Chief Engine Room Artificer Watts heard the torpedo best of all: it came like a hammer blow, hitting the ship's side a great splitting crack, and when, a few seconds afterward, the telegraph rang for an increase of speed, his hand was on the steam valve already.

Ericson took *Compass Rose* in a wide half-circle to starboard, away from the convoy, hunting for the U-boat down what he presumed had been the track of the torpedo; but they found nothing that looked like a contact, and presently he circled back again, toward the ship that had been hit. She had fallen out of line, like one winged bird in a flight of duck, letting the rest of the convoy go by: she was sinking fast, and already her screws were out of



water and she was poised for the long plunge. The cries of men in fear came from her, and a thick smell of oil. Ericson, trying for a cool decision in this moment of pity, decided to drop a boat and leave it to collect what survivors it could while *Compass Rose* went on hunting the U-boat. But it must be done quickly.

Ferraby, summoned to the quarterdeck voice pipe, put every effort he knew into controlling his voice. "Ferraby, sir."

"We're going to drop a boat, sub. Who's your leading hand?"

"Leading Seaman Tonbridge, sir."

"Tell him to pick a small crew — not more than four — and row over toward the ship. Tell him to keep well clear until she goes down. They may be able to get some boats away themselves, but if not, he'll have to do the best he can. We'll come back for him when we've had another look for the submarine."

"Right, sir."

Ferraby threw himself into the job with an energy that was a drug for all other feeling: the boat was lowered so swiftly that when *Compass Rose* drew away from it the torpedoed ship was still afloat. But she was only just afloat, balanced between sea and sky before her last dive; and as Tonbridge took the tiller and glanced in her direction to get his bearings, there was a rending sound that carried clearly over the water, and she started to go down. Tonbridge watched, in awe and fear: it had been bad enough to be lowered into the darkness from *Compass Rose*, and to watch her fade away and be left alone in a small boat under the stars, with the convoy also fading and a vast unfriendly sea all round them; but now, with the torpedoed ship disappearing before their eyes, and the men shouting and crying as they splashed about in the water, and the smell of oil coming across to them thick and choking, it was more like a nightmare than anything else. Tonbridge was 23 years of age, a product of the London slums conditioned by seven years' naval training; faced by this ordeal, the fact that he did not run away from it, the fact that he remained effective, was beyond all normal credit.

They did what they could: rowing about in the darkness, guided by the shouting, appalled by the choking cries of men who drowned before they could be reached, they tried their utmost to rescue and to succor. They collected 14 men: one was dead, one was dying, eight were wounded, and the rest were shocked and prostrated to a pitiful degree. It was very nearly 15 men: Tonbridge actually had hold of the 15th, who was gasping in the last stages of terror and exhaustion, but the film of oil on his naked body made him impossible to grasp, and he slipped away

and sank before a rope could be got round him. When there were no more shadows on the water, and no more cries to follow, they rested on their oars, and waited; alone on the enormous black waste of the Atlantic, alone with the settling wreckage and the reek of oil; and so, presently, *Compass Rose* found them.

IN THE big seamen's-mess deck, under the shaded lamps, Lockhart was doing things he had never imagined possible. Now and again he recalled, with a spark of pleasure, his previous doubts: there was plenty of blood here to faint at, but that wasn't the way things were working out. . . . He had stitched up a gash in a man's head, from the nose to the line of the hair — as he took the catgut from its envelope he had thought: "I wish they'd include some directions with this stuff." He had set a broken leg, using part of a bench as a splint. He bound up other cuts and gashes, he did what he could for a man with an arm scalded by steam, who was now insensible with pain: he watched helplessly, doing nothing with a curious hurt detachment, as a man who had drenched his intestines and perhaps his lungs with fuel oil slowly died. Some of *Compass Rose's* crew made a ring round him, looking at him, helping him when he asked for help: the two stewards brought tea for the cold and shocked survivors, other men offered dry clothing, and Tallow, after an hour or two, came down and gave him the largest tot of rum he had ever seen. It was not too large.

It was nearly daylight before he finished; and he went up to the bridge at a slow dragging walk, completely played out. He met Ericson at the top of the ladder: they had both been working throughout the night, and the two exhausted men looked at each other in silence, unable to put any expression into their stiff drawn faces, yet somehow acknowledging each other's competence. There was blood on Lockhart's hands, and on the sleeves of his duffel coat: Ericson looked at it for some time before he realized what it was.

"You must have been busy, Number One," he said quietly. "What's the score down there?"

"Two dead, sir," answered Lockhart. His voice was very hoarse, and he cleared his throat. "One more to go, I think — he's been swimming and walking about with a badly burned arm, and the shock is too much. Eleven others. They ought to be all right."

"Fourteen . . . The crew was 36 altogether."

Lockhart shrugged. There was no answer to that one, and if there had been he could not have found it, in his present mood: the past few hours, spent watching and touching pain, seemed to have deadened all normal feeling. He looked round at the ships on their beam, just emerging as the light grew.

"How about things up here?" he asked.

"We lost another ship, over the other side of the convoy. That made three."

"More than one submarine?"

"I shouldn't think so. She probably crossed over."

"Good night's work." Lockhart still could not express more than a formal regret. "Do you want to turn in, sir? I can finish this watch."

"No — you get some sleep. I'll wait for Ferraby and Baker."

"Tonbridge did well."

"Yes . . . So did you, Number One."

Lockhart shook his head. "It was pretty rough, most of it. I must get a little book on wounds. It's going to come in handy, if this sort of thing goes on."

"There's no reason why it shouldn't," said Ericson. "No reason at all, that I can see. Three ships in three hours: probably a hundred men all told. Easy."

"Yes," said Lockhart, nodding. "A very promising start. After the war, we must ask them how they do it."

"After the war," said Ericson, "I hope they'll be asking us."

WITH 1941 advancing, they were a year older, and so was the

war; and the further it progressed the deeper they seemed to be involved in failure and setback.

The tide was now set and running strongly against all Allied shipping: over a full two thirds of the Atlantic the attackers had the initiative, and they held on to it and gave it ruthless force and effectiveness. It was like a dark stain spreading all over this huge sea: the area of safety diminished, the poisoned water, in which no ship could count on safety from hour to hour, seemed swiftly to infect a wider and wider circle. In the background, the big ships skirmished and occasionally came to blows: the *Hipper*, the *Scharnhorst*, and the *Gneisenau* emerged on raiding forays, the *Hood* was sunk by one prodigious shot at 11 miles' range, and then, in a swift counterstroke, the destruction of the *Bismarck* squared the account. But these were dramatic surprises, highlights of a ponderous and intermittent warfare: plying to and fro ceaselessly, the convoys fought their longer and bloodier battle against a multiplying enemy.

The enemy was planning as well as multiplying. The U-boats now hunted in packs, six or seven in a group, quartering a huge area of the convoy route and summoning their full strength as soon as a contact was obtained. They had the use of French, Norwegian and Baltic ports, fully equipped for shelter and maintenance: they had long-range aircraft to spot and identify for them, they had numbers, they had training, they had better weapons, they had the spur of success. The first concerted pack-attack sank 10 out of 22 ships in one convoy: the monthly record of sinkings mounted — 53 in one month, 57 in another. The U-boats gradually extended their operations further westward, until there was no longer, in mid-Atlantic, a safe dispersal-area for the convoys; neither from Britain, Canada nor Iceland could complete air cover be provided, and the escorts themselves were limited in their endurance. So the stain spread, and the ships went down. There were countermeasures: patrolling aircraft extended their range, a number of merchant ships were provided with fighters launched

by catapult, and the quality of the weapons in the escorts improved slowly: to mark this improvement, one month in the middle of 1941 saw seven U-boats sent to the bottom—the highest total of the war. But seven U-boats were not enough: there were still too many of them hunting and striking, and not enough escorts to screen the convoys: there was still a vast margin that could only be covered by luck and human endeavor, and neither of these could match the pace of the enemy, or stop the slaughter.

Of this slaughter, *Compass Rose* saw her full share. It was no longer a surprise when the alarm bell sounded, no longer a shock to see the derelict humanity that was hoisted over the side after a ship went down: it was no longer moving to watch the dying and bury the dead. They developed—they had to develop—a professional inhumanity toward their job, a lack of feeling which was the best guarantee of efficiency. Hardened to pain and destruction, taking it all for granted, they concentrated as best they could on fighting back and on saving men for one purpose only—so that they could be returned to the battle as soon as possible.

They did four more convoys, of the rough, nervous character that marked most convoys nowadays; and then, at high summer, they were given what they had been looking forward to for many months—a refit, with the long leave that went with it; the first long leave since *Compass Rose* was commissioned. They had all wanted that leave: many of them needed it badly: life on Atlantic convoys was a matter of slowly increasing strain mounting toward a crucial point not yet foreseen, and it took its toll of men's nerves and patience, as surely as of ships.

Not less than her crew, *Compass Rose* herself needed the respite. It was the first substantial break in service since she had left the Clyde, nearly two years before: apart from necessary minor repairs, designs had altered, weapons improved, and personnel increased. The total list of alterations and additions was a substantial one; and *Compass Rose*, sinking back gratefully in the

hands of the shipyard, turned her face from the sea and settled down to a six weeks' course of rejuvenation.

BY THE END of her refit, they hardly knew *Compass Rose*. She seemed to have moved right out of the corvette class altogether, and to have been graduated with unexpected honors. The new bridge was a replica of a destroyer's, with a covered chart table and plenty of room to walk about; the sick bay, presided over by a sick-berth attendant who had actually been a country vet at one period, was properly fitted up and stocked for most of the emergencies they had met so far. There were more depth charges and antiaircraft guns: there was the new asdic set: above all, there was now a brand-new weapon altogether — radar. There need be no more hanging-on and punishing the eyes at night; no more searching for lost ships or for the incoming convoy — there they were, clearly picked out on the screen, scores of miles away. But beyond this, perhaps radar would, as a weapon not yet in German hands, start to equalize the Atlantic score, meeting the cunning and secret attack with a delicate revealing finger, the best that science could do for man.

The smiling weather of that late summer helped them to settle down to seagoing again, after the relaxation of their refit, and they quickly made the transfer from land to seafaring. Clear of the tie of land, they were once more part of an increased escort — two destroyers and five corvettes — charged with the care of 21 deep-laden ships bound for Gibraltar. This was their real task, and they turned to it again with the readiness of men who, knowing that the task was crucial, were never wholly convinced that the Navy could afford to let them take a holiday.

The treachery of that perfect weather, the lure of the easy transition, were not long in the declaring. It started with a four-engined Focke-Wulf reconnaissance plane that closed the convoy from the eastward and then began to go round them in slow

circles, well out of range of any gunfire they could put up. It had happened to them before, and there was little doubt of what the plane was doing — pinpointing the convoy, and then tipping off any U-boats that might be nearby. The change this time lay in the fact that it was occurring so early in their voyage.

At dusk the plane withdrew, droning away eastward at the same level pace: up on the bridge, preparing to darken ship for the night, they watched it go with gloomy foreboding.

"It's too easy," said Ericson, voicing their thoughts. "All it's got to do is fly round us, sending out some kind of homing signal, and every U-boat within a hundred miles just steers straight for us." He eyed the sky, innocent and cloudless. "I wish it would blow up a bit. This sort of weather doesn't give us a chance."

There was nothing that night, except a signal at 11 o'clock addressed by the Admiralty to their convoy. "There are indications of five U-boats in your area, with others joining," it warned them, and left them to make the best they could of it. As soon as darkness fell the convoy changed its course from the one the aircraft had observed, going off at a sharp tangent in the hope of escaping the pursuit: perhaps it was successful, perhaps the U-boats were still out of range, for the five hours of darkness passed without incident, while on the radar screen the compact square of ships and the outlying fringe of escorts moved steadily forward, undisturbed, escaping notice. *Viperous*, making her routine dash round the convoy at first light, signaled: "I think we fooled them" as she swept past *Compass Rose*. The steep wave of her wash had just started them rolling when they heard the drone of an aircraft, and the spy was with them again.

The first ship was torpedoed and set on fire at midday. She was a big tanker — all the 21 ships in the convoy were of substantial size, many of them bound for Malta and the eastern Mediterranean: it was a hand-picked lot, a valuable prize well worth the harrying. And harried they were, without quarter: the swift destruction of that first ship marked the beginning of an

eight-day battle that took steady toll of the convoy, thinning out the ships each night with horrible regularity.

They fought back, they did their best; but the odds against them were too high, the chinks in their armor impossible to safeguard against so many circling enemies.

"There are nine U-boats in your area," said the Admiralty at dusk that night; and the nine U-boats sank three ships, one of them in circumstances of special horror. She was known to be carrying about 20 Wrens, the first draft to be sent to Gibraltar: aboard *Compass Rose* they had watched the girls strolling about the deck, had waved to them as they passed. The ship that carried them was the last to be struck that night: she went down swiftly in flames, with a savage hissing roar, indescribably cruel. "Good Lord, it's those poor kids!" exclaimed Ericson, jolted out of a calm he could not preserve at so horrible a moment. But there was nothing that they could do: they were busy on a wide search ordered by *Viperous*, and they could not leave it.

Four of the girls were in fact picked up by another merchant ship. They were to be seen next morning, sitting close together on the upper deck, staring out at the water: there was no gay waving now, from either side. . . . But the ship that rescued them was one of the two that were sunk that same night: she, too, went down swiftly, and *Compass Rose*, detailed this time to pick up survivors, could only add four to her own total of living passengers, and six to the dead.

Six ships were gone already: six ships in two days, and they still had a week to go before they were near the shelter of land. But now they had a stroke of luck: a succession of two dark nights that, combined with a violently evasive alteration of course, threw the pursuit off the scent. Though they were still on the alert, and the tension, particularly at night, was still there, for 48 hours they enjoyed a wonderful sense of respite: the convoy, now reduced to 15 ships, cracked on speed, romping along toward the southern horizon and the promise of safety. Aboard *Compass*

Rose, a cheerful optimism succeeded the sense of ordained misfortune that had begun to take hold. Hope grew: they might see harbor after all.

So IT WAS for two days and two nights; and then the aircraft, casting wide circles in the clear dawn sky, found them again.

Rose, the young signalman, heard it first: a stirring in the upper air, a faint purring whisper that meant discovery. He looked round him swiftly, his head cocked on one side: he called out: "Aircraft, sir — somewhere. . . ." and Ferraby and Baker, who had the forenoon watch, came to the alert in the same swift nervous movement. The throbbing grew, and achieved a definite direction — somewhere on their port beam, away from the convoy and toward the distant Spanish coast. "Captain, sir!" called Baker down the voice pipe, "sound of aircraft —" But Ericson was already mounting the bridge ladder, brought up from his sea cabin by the hated noise. He looked round him, narrowing his eyes against the bright day, and then: "There it is!" he exclaimed suddenly, and pointed. On their beam, emerging from the pearly morning mist that lay low on the horizon all round them, was the plane, the spying eye of the enemy.

They all stared at it, every man on the bridge, bound together by the same feeling of anger and hatred. It was so unfair. . . . U-boats they could deal with — or at least the odds were more level: with a bit of luck in the weather, and the normal skill of sailors, the convoy could feint and twist and hope to escape their pursuit. But this predatory messenger from another sphere — this betrayer could never be balked. They felt, as they watched the aircraft, a sense of nakedness, an ineffectual rage.

Swiftly the aircraft must have done *its work*, and the U-boats could not have been far away; within 12 hours, back they came, and that night cost the convoy two more ships out of the dwindling fleet. The hunt was up once more, the pack exultant. They did their best: the escorts counterattacked with depth charges, the con-

voy altered course and increased its speed: all to no purpose. The sixth day dawned, the sixth night came: punctually at midnight the alarm bells sounded and the first distress rocket soared up into the night sky, telling of a ship mortally hit and calling for help. She burned for a long time, reddening the water, lifting sluggishly with the swell, becoming at last a flickering oily pyre that the convoy slowly left astern. Then there was a pause of more than two hours, while they remained alert at action stations and the convoy slid southward under a black moonless sky; and then, on the seaward horizon, five miles away from them, there was a sudden return of violence. A brilliant orange flash split the darkness, died down, flared up again, and then guttered away to nothing. Clearly it was another ship hit — but this time, for them, it was much more than a ship; for this time it was *Sorrel*.

They all knew it must be *Sorrel* because of an earlier signal they had relayed to her from *Viperous*. "In case of an attack tonight," said the signal, "*Sorrel* will proceed five miles astern and to seaward of the convoy, and create a diversion by dropping depth charges, firing rockets, etc. This may draw the main attack away from the convoy." They had seen the rockets earlier that night, and disregarded them: they only meant that *Sorrel*, busy in a corner, was doing her stuff according to plan. . . . Probably that plan had been effective, if the last two hours' lull was anything to go by. But, in the process, someone had to suffer: *Sorrel* became the mark, in default of a richer prize, meeting her lonely end in the outer ring of darkness beyond the convoy.

Poor *Sorrel*, poor sister corvette . . . Up on the bridge of *Compass Rose*, the men who had known her best of all were now the mourners, standing separated from each other by the blackness of night but bound by the same shock, the same incredulous sorrow. How could it have happened to *Sorrel*, to an escort like themselves. . . . Immediately he saw the explosion, Ericson had rung down to the wireless office. "*Viperous* from *Compass Rose*," he dictated. "'*Sorrel* torpedoed in her diversion position. May I

leave and search for survivors?" Then, the message sent, they waited, silent in the darkness of the bridge, eying the dim bulk of the nearest ship, occasionally turning back to where *Sorrel* had been struck. No one said a word: there were no words for this. There were only thoughts, and not many of those.

The bell of the wireless office rang sharply, breaking the silence, and Leading Signalman Wells, who was standing by the voice pipe, bent down to it. "Bridge!" he said, and listened for a moment. Then he straightened up, and called to the Captain across the gray width of the bridge. "Answer from *Viperous*, sir . . . 'Do not leave convoy until daylight.'"

There was silence again, a sickened, appalled silence. Ericson set his teeth. He might have guessed. . . . It was the right answer, of course, from the cold technical angle: *Viperous* simply could not afford to take another escort from the screen, and send her off on a nonessential job. It was the right answer, but what a hard one! . . . Back there in the lonely darkness, ten miles and more away by now, men they knew well were dying, sailors like themselves: and they were to be left to die, or, at best, their rescue was to be delayed for a period that must cost many lives. *Sorrel* was the first escort that had been lost out of their group, and she was, of all the ones that could have gone, their own chummy-ship, the ship they had tied up alongside after countless convoys, for two years on end: manned by their friends, men they played tombola with or met in pubs ashore. For *Sorrel* to be torpedoed was bad enough; but to leave her crew to sink or swim in the darkness was the cruelest stroke of all.

"Daylight," said Morell suddenly, breaking the oppressive silence on the bridge. "Two more hours to wait."

Ericson found himself answering: "Yes" — not to Morell's words, but to what he had meant. It was cold. With two hours to wait, and the time it would take them to run back to where *Sorrel* had gone down, there would be very few men left to pick up. There were in fact 15—15 out of a ship's company of 90.

They found them without much difficulty, toward the end of the morning watch, sighting the two specks which were Carley rafts across three miles or more of flat unruffled sea. Ericson, looking through his binoculars at the ragged handful that remained, caught sight of the gray face of *Sorrel's* captain, Ramsay, his friend for many years. Ramsay was holding a body in his arms, a young sailor ugly and pitiful in death, the head thrown back, the mouth hanging open. But the living face above the dead one was hardly less pitiful. The whole story — the lost ship, the lost crew, the pain and exhaustion of the last six hours — all these were in Ramsay's face as he sat, holding the dead body, waiting for rescue.

It was a true captain's face, a captain in defeat who mourned his ship, and bore alone the monstrous burden of its loss.

By NOON of the seventh day, the tally of ships remaining was 11 — 11 out of the original 21; behind them were ten good merchant ships sunk, and countless men drowned, and one of the escorts lost as well. It was horrible to think of the hundreds of miles of sea that lay in their wake, strewn with the oil and the wreckage and the corpses they were leaving behind them: it was like some revolting paper chase, with the convoy laying a trail from an enormous suppurating satchel of blood and treasure.

It was not a one-sided battle, with repeated hammer strokes on the one hand and a futile dodging on the other, but it was not much better than that; there were too many U-boats in contact with them, not enough escorts, not enough speed or maneuverability in the convoy to give it a level chance. *Compass Rose* had dropped more than 40 depth charges on her various counterattacks, some of which should have done some damage: the other escorts had put up a lively display of energy: *Viperous* herself, after one accurate attack, had sufficient evidence in the way of oil and wreckage to claim a U-boat destroyed. But as far as the overall picture was concerned, all this was simply a feeble beating of the air: with so many U-boats in their area, miracles were neces-

sary to escape the appalling trap the convoy had run into, and no miracles came. There was no chance of winning, and no way of retreat; all they could do was to close their ranks, make the best speed they could, and sweat it out to the end.

Compass Rose had never been so crowded, so crammed with survivors. There were 14 Merchant Navy officers in the ward-room: there were 121 others—seamen, firemen, cooks, lascars, Chinese—thronging the upper deck by day, and at night crowding into the mess decks to eat and sleep and wait for the next dawn. During the dark hours, indeed, the darkened fo'c'sle under the shaded yellow lamp was a scene from the *Inferno*, a nightmare of tension and confusion and discomfort and pain.

It was impossible to pick one's way from one end of the fo'c'sle to the other, as Lockhart did each night when he made the rounds, without being shocked and appalled and saddened by this slum corner of the war; and yet somehow one could be heartened also, and cheered by an impression of patience and endurance, and made to feel proud. . . . Individuals, here and there, might have been pushed close to defeat or panic; but the gross crowding, the rags, the oil, the bandages, the smell of men in adversity, were *still* not enough to defeat the whole company. They were all sailors there, not to be overwhelmed even by this sudden and sustained nightmare: it would have to be a lot worse than this before they changed their minds about the sea.

The seventh night, all that the circling pack of U-boats could account for was one ship, the smallest ship in the convoy. She was hit astern, and she went down slowly: out of her whole company the only casualty was a single lascar seaman who jumped (as he thought) into the sea with a wild cry and landed headfirst in one of the lifeboats. In the midst of the wholesale slaughter, this comedy exit had just the right touch of fantasy about it to make it seem really funny. . . . But even so, this ship was the 11th to be lost, out of the original 21: it put them over the halfway mark, establishing a new and atrocious record in U-boat suc-

cesses. And the next night, the eighth and last of the battle, when they were within 300 miles of Gibraltar, made up for any apparent slackening in the rate of destruction.

Three more ships that last night cost, and one of them — yet another loaded tanker torpedoed and set on fire — was the special concern of *Compass Rose*. It was she who was nearest when the ship was struck, and she circled round as the oil, cascading and spouting from the tanker's open side, took fire and spread over the surface of the water like a flaming carpet in a pitch-black room. Silhouetted against this roaring backcloth, which soon rose to 50 feet in the air, *Compass Rose* must have been visible for miles around: even in swift movement she made a perfect target, and Ericson, trying to decide whether to stop and pick up survivors, or whether the risk would not be justified, could visualize clearly what they would look like when stationary against this wall of flame. *Compass Rose*, with her crew and her painfully collected shipload of survivors, would be a sitting mark from 10 miles away. . . . But they had been detailed as rescue ship: there were men in the water, there were boats from the tanker already lowered and pulling away from the tower of flame: there was a job to be done, a work of mercy, if the risk were acceptable — if it were worth hazarding 200 lives in order to gain 50 more, if prudence could be stretched to include humanity.

It was Ericson's decision alone. It was a captain's moment, a pure test of nerve: it was, once again, the reality that lay behind the two-and-a-half stripes on the sleeve. While Ericson, silent on the bridge, considered the chances, there was not a man in the ship who would have changed places with him.

The order, when it came, was swift and decisive.

"Stop engines!"

"Stop engines, sir. . . . Engines stopped, wheel amidships, sir."

"Number One!"

"Sir?" said Lockhart.

"Stand by to get those survivors inboard. We won't lower a

boat—they'll have to swim or row toward us. God knows they can see us easily enough. Use a megaphone to hurry them up."

"Aye aye, sir."

As Lockhart turned to leave the bridge, the Captain added, almost conversationally:

"We don't want to waste any time, Number One."

All over the ship a prickling silence fell, as *Compass Rose* slowly came to a stop and waited, rolling gently, lit by the glare from the fire. From the bridge, every detail of the upper deck could be picked out: there was no flickering in this huge illumination, simply a steady glow that threw a black shadow on the sea behind them, that showed them naked to the enemy. Waiting aft among his depth-charge crews, while the flames roared and three boats crept toward them, and faint shouting and bobbing lights here and there on the water indicated a valiant swimmer making for safety, Ferraby was conscious only of a terror-stricken impatience. "Oh God, oh God, oh God," he thought, almost aloud. "Let us give this up, let us get moving again. . . ." Twenty feet away from him in the port waist, Lockhart was coolly directing the preliminaries to the work of rescue—rigging a sling for the wounded men, securing the scrambling nets that hung over the side, by which men in the water could pull themselves up. Ferraby watched him, not with admiration or envy but with a futile hatred. "Damn you," he thought, once more almost saying the words out loud. "How can you be like that, why don't you feel like me—or if you do, why don't you show it?" He turned away from the brisk figures and the glowing heat of the flames, his eyes traversing the arch of black sky overhead, a sky blotched and streaked by smoke and whirling sparks; he looked behind him, at the outer darkness that the fire could not pierce, the place where the submarines must be lying and watching them. No submarine within 50 miles could miss this beacon, no submarine within five could resist chancing a torpedo, no submarine within two could fail to hit the silhouetted target, the stationary



prey. It was wicked to stop like this, just for a lot of damned merchant navy roughs. . . .

A boat drew alongside, bumping and scraping: Lockhart called out: "Hook on forrard!" there were sounds of scrambling: an anonymous voice, foreign, slightly breathless, said: "God bless you for stopping!" The work of collection began.

It did not take long, save in their own minds; but coming toward the end of the long continued ordeal of the voyage, when there was no man in the ship who was not near to exhaustion, those minutes spent motionless in the limelight had a creeping and paralytic tension. It seemed impossible for them to take such a reckless chance, and not be punished for it; there was, in the war at sea, a certain limiting factor to bravery, and beyond that, fate stood waiting with a ferocious rebuke. "If we don't buy it this time," said Wainwright, the torpedo man, standing by his depth charges and staring at the flames, "Jerry doesn't *deserve* to win the war." It did seem, indeed, that if *Sorrel* could be hit when she was zigzagging at 14 knots, there wouldn't be much trouble with *Compass Rose*; and as the minutes passed, while they collected three boatloads of survivors and a handful of swimmers, and the huge circle of fire gave its steady illumination, they seemed to be getting deeper and deeper into a situation from which they would never be able to retreat. The men who had work to do were lucky: the men who simply waited, like Ericson on the bridge or the stokers below the water line, knew, in those few agonizing minutes, the meaning of fear.

It never happened: that was the miracle of that night. Perhaps some U-boat fired and missed, perhaps those within range, content with their success, had submerged for safety's sake and broken off the attack; at any rate, *Compass Rose* was allowed her extraordinary hazard, without having to settle the bill. When there were no more men to pick up, she got under way again: the returning pulse of her engine, heard and felt throughout the ship, came like some incredible last-minute respite, astonishing

them all. But the pulse strengthened and quickened, in triumphant chorus, and she drew away from the flames and the smell of oil with her extra load of survivors snatched from the very mouth of danger, and her flaunting gesture unchallenged. They had taken the chance, and it had come off; mixed with the exhilaration of that triumph was a sober thankfulness for deliverance, a certain humility. Perhaps it would not do to think too much about it; perhaps it was better to bury the moment as quickly as possible, and forget it, and not take that chance again.

ANOTHER SHIP, on the opposite wing, went down just before dawn; and as daylight strengthened and the rags of the convoy drew together again, they witnessed the last cruel episode of the voyage.

Lagging behind with some engine defect, a third ship was hit, and began to settle down on her way to the bottom. She sank slowly, but owing to bad organization, or the villainous list the torpedoing gave her, no boats got away; for her crew, it was a time for swimming, for jumping into the water, and striking out away from the fatal downward suction, and trusting to luck. *Compass Rose*, dropping back to come to her aid, circled round as the ship began to disappear; and then, as she dipped below the level of the sea and the swirling ripples began to spread outward, Ericson turned his ship's bows toward the center of disaster, and the bobbing heads that dotted the surface of the water. But it was not to be a straightforward rescue; for just as he was opening his mouth to give the order for lowering a boat, the asdic set picked up a contact, an undersca echo so crisp and well-defined that it could only be a U-boat.

Lockhart, at his action station in the asdic compartment, felt his heart miss a beat as he heard that echo. At last . . . He called through the open window: "Echo bearing 225—moving left!" and bent over the asdic set in acute concentration. Ericson increased the revolutions again, and turned away from the indicated

bearing, meaning to increase the range: if they were to drop depth charges, they would need a longer run-in to get up speed. He called out: "What's it look like, Number One?" and Lockhart, hearing the harsh pinging noise and watching the mark on the recording set, said: "Submarine, sir — can't be anything else." He continued to call out the bearing and the range of the contact: Ericson prepared to take the ship in, at attacking speed, and to drop a pattern of depth charges on the way; and then, as *Compass Rose* turned toward the target, gathering speed for the onslaught, they all noticed something that had escaped their attention before. The place where the U-boat lay, the point where they must drop their charges, was alive with swimming survivors.

The Captain drew in his breath sharply at the sight. There were about 40 men in the water, concentrated in a small space: if he went ahead with the attack he must, for certain, kill them all. He knew well enough, as did everyone on board, the effect of depth charges exploding underwater — the splitting crash that made the sea jump and boil and spout skyward, the aftermath of torn seaweed and dead fish. Now there were men instead of fish and seaweed, men swimming toward him in confidence and hope. . . . And yet the U-boat was there, one of the pack that had been harassing and bleeding them for days on end, the destroying menace that *must* have priority, because of what it might do to other ships and other convoys in the future: he could hear the echo on the relay-loudspeaker, he acknowledged Lockhart's developed judgment where the asdic set was concerned. As the seconds sped by, and the range closed, he fought against his doubts, and against the softening instinct of mercy; the book said: "Attack at all costs," and this was a page out of the book, and the men swimming in the water did not matter at all when it was a question of bringing one of the killers to account.

But for a few moments longer he tried to gain support and confidence for what he had to do.

"What's it look like now, Number One?"

"The same, sir — solid echo — exactly the right size— *must* be a U-boat."

"Is it **moving**?"

"Very slowly."

"There are some men in the water, just about there."

There was no answer from Lockhart. The range decreased as *Compass Rose* ran in: they were now within 600 yards of the swimmers and the U-boat, the fatal coincidence that had to be ignored.

"What's it look like now?" Ericson repeated.

"Just the same — seems to be stationary — it's the strongest contact we've ever had."

"There are some chaps in the water."

"Well, there's a U-boat just underneath them."

"All right, then," thought Ericson, with a new unlooked-for access of brutality to help him: "We'll go for the U-boat. . . ." With no more hesitation he gave the order: "Attacking — stand by!" to the depth-charge positions aft; and having made this sickening choice he swept in to the attack with a deadened mind, intent only on one kind of kill, pretending there was no other.

Many of the men in the water waved wildly as they saw what was happening: some of them screamed, some threw themselves out of the ship's path and thrashed furiously in the hope of reaching safety: others, slower witted or nearer to exhaustion, still thought that *Compass Rose* was speeding to their rescue, and continued to wave and smile almost to their last moment. . . . The ship came among the swimmers like an avenging angel; the amazement and horror on their faces was reflected aboard *Compass Rose*, where many of the crew, particularly among the depth-charge parties aft, could not believe what they were being called upon to do. The firing bell sounded and the charges rolled over the stern or were rocketed outward from the throwers.

There was a deadly pause, while for a few moments the men aboard *Compass Rose* and the men left behind in her wake stared

at each other, in pity and fear and a kind of basic disbelief; and then with a huge hammer-crack the depth charges exploded.

Mercifully the details were hidden in the flurry and roar of the explosion; and the men must all have died instantly, shocked out of life by the tremendous pressure of the sea thrown up upon their bodies. But one freak item of the horror impressed itself on the memory. As the tormented water leaped upward in a solid gray cloud, the single figure of a man was tossed high on the very plume of the fountain, a puppet figure of whirling arms and legs seeming to make, in death, wild gestures of anger and reproach. It appeared to hang on a long time in the air, cursing them all, before falling back into the boiling sea.

No one looked at Ericson as they left the explosion area: if they had done so, they might have been shocked by his expression and his extraordinary pallor. Now deep in self-torture, and appalled by what he had done, he was obsessed with the notion that there had been no U-boat there in the first place: the contact was probably the torpedoed ship, sliding slowly to the bottom. The slaughter he had inflicted was something extra, a large, entirely British-made contribution to the success of the voyage.

BY THE TIME they were past the Straits and had smelled the burnt smell of Africa blowing across from Ceuta, and had shaped a course for Gibraltar harbor, they were all far off balance.

It had gone on too long, it had failed too horribly, it had cost too much. They had been at action stations for virtually eight days on end, missing hours of sleep, making do with scratch meals of cocoa and corned-beef sandwiches, living all the time under recurrent anxieties that often reached a desperate tension. There had hardly been a moment of the voyage when they could forget the danger that lay in wait for them and the days of strain that stretched ahead, and relax and find peace. They had been hungry and dirty and tired, from one sunrise to the next: they had lived in a ship crammed and disorganized by nearly

three times her normal complement. Through it all, they had had to preserve an alertness and a keyed-up efficiency, hard enough to maintain even in normal circumstances.

The deadly part was that it had all been in vain, it had all been wasted: there could have been no more futile expense of endurance and nervous energy. Besides *Sorrel*, which was in a special category of disaster, they had lost 14 ships out of the original 21 — two thirds of the entire convoy, wiped out by a series of pack-attacks so adroit and so ferocious that countermeasures had been quite useless. That was the most wretched element of the voyage — the inescapable sense of futility, the conviction that there were always more U-boats than escorts and that the U-boats could strike, and strike home, practically as they willed.

To offset the mortal bleeding of the convoy, by far the worst of this or any other war, *Viperous* had sunk one U-boat: a second had probably been destroyed; and *Compass Rose* herself had collected 175 survivors — nearly twice the number of her own crew. But this seemed nothing much, when set alongside the total loss of lives: it seemed nothing much, when measured against the men they had depth-charged and killed: it seemed nothing much, when shadowed by the stricken figure of *Sorrel's* captain, wordless and brooding at the back of their bridge as *Compass Rose* slid into the shelter of Gibraltar Harbor, under the huge Rock that dwarfed and mocked the tiny defeated ships below.

LOCKHART found Captain Ericson some time after midnight, leaning over the rail just outside his cabin, staring down at the water, muttering vaguely. He had been drinking steadily since four o'clock, in an attempt to forget or to blur the edges of certain scenes from their recent voyage. It had not been successful, as a glance at his face showed all too plainly. Lockhart himself, though he had had less to drink, was in no better case as far as his private thoughts were concerned. He felt quite unable to turn in: he had the jitters: like nearly everyone else in the ship, he was

exhausted beyond the point of relaxation, his brain had too much company for sleep.

But there was the Captain, leaning over the rail in helpless defeat. Someone on board was even worse off than himself. . . . The big tough figure stirred as Lockhart approached and turned toward him. "Are you all right, sir?" asked Lockhart.

"No," answered Ericson readily. "I don't mind telling *you* that I'm not." His tone was thick and slurring: it was the first time Lockhart had ever heard it so, and after their two years of close association it was hard to identify the surrendered voice with the competent one he knew so well.

Lockhart came close to him, and leaned against the rail also. They were on the side away from the quay: before them was the harbor, ghostly under the moonlight, and ahead was the black shadow of the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*, their nearest neighbor, and behind towered the huge Rock of Gibraltar, the haven for which they had been steering. All round them the ship, at rest after her disastrous voyage, was oppressively silent.

"You've got to forget all about it," said Lockhart, suddenly breaking through the normal barrier of reserve that separated them. "It's no good worrying about it now. You can't change anything."

"There *was* a submarine," shouted Ericson in a furious voice. He was now helplessly drunk. "I'm bloody well sure of it. . . . It's all in the report."

"It was my fault, anyway," said Lockhart. "I identified it as a submarine. If anyone killed those men, I killed them."

Ericson looked up at him. Incredibly, there were tears in his eyes, proclaiming his weakness and his manhood in the same revealing moment. Lockhart looked at them in amazement and compassion: how moving was that pale working face, how comforting, after their ordeal, the glistening tears of this strong man. . . . He made as if to speak, wanting to forestall Ericson and save him from further revelation; but the other man suddenly put



his hand on his shoulder and said, in an almost normal voice:

"No one killed them. . . . It's the war, the whole bloody war. . . . We've just got to do these things, and say our prayers at the end. . . . Have you been drinking, Number One?"

"Yes, sir," said Lockhart. "Quite a lot."

"So have I . . . First time since we commissioned . . . Good night."

Without waiting for an answer he turned and lurched toward his cabin entrance. After a moment there was a thud, and Lockhart, following him into the cabin, found that he had collapsed and was lying face downward in his armchair, dead to the world.

"Sir," said Lockhart formally, "you'd better get to bed."

There was no sound save Ericson's heavy breathing.

"You poor devil," said Lockhart, half to himself, half to the prone figure spread-eagled below him, "you poor devil, you've just about had enough, haven't you?" He considered getting the other man's clothes off and somehow bundling him into his bunk, but he knew the helpless weight would be far too much for him. Instead he began to heave the Captain's body round so as to settle him comfortably in the armchair, talking out loud as he did so. "I can't get you to bed, my dear and revered Captain, but I can at least snug you down for the night. . . . You'll have quite a head when you wake up, God bless you. . . . Get your legs out straight. . . ." He eased Ericson's collar and tie, looked down at him for a moment more as he lay relaxed in the armchair, and then moved toward the doorway. "That's the best I can do for you," he murmured, his hand on the light switch. "Wish it could be more, wish I could *really* cure you. . . ." He clicked off the light. "Drunk or sober, Ericson, you're all right. . . ."

He was already halfway through the doorway when he heard the other man's voice behind him, vague and sleepy.

"Number One," said Ericson, "I heard that."

"That's all right, sir," said Lockhart, without embarrassment.

"I meant it. . . . Good night."

ON THE sixth day of their journey home, late in the forenoon watch, Chief Engine Room Artificer Watts came up to the bridge with a worried frown on his face. So far, things had been going well with their return convoy: there had been no shadowing aircraft, no scares about U-boats waiting for them, no drama of any sort. But now there was a chance of things not going well at all, and it was he who had to break the news.

"Captain, sir!" Watts stood at the back of the bridge, awkwardly shifting his feet on the smooth white planking. He never came up there if he could help it, because it made him feel entirely out of place: his proper station was the engine room three decks below, among the pipes and the gauges that he understood so well. Ericson, who had been preparing to check their noon position, and enjoying the sunshine at the same time, turned round at the sound of his voice. "Well, Chief? Anything wrong?"

"Afraid so, sir." Watts came forward, rubbing his hands on his overalls. His gray creased face was full of concern. "I've got a bearing I don't like the feel of at all. Running hot, it is — nearly red-hot. I'd like to stop and have a look at it, sir."

"Do you mean the main shaft, Chief?" Ericson knew that his knowledge of the engine room, sufficient for normal purposes, did not include all the technical refinements, and he wanted to get his facts straight.

"Yes, sir. Must be a blocked oil pipe, by the look of it."

"Any good if we slow down? I don't want to stop if we can help it."

Watts shook his head vigorously. "If we keep the shaft turning it's liable to seize up, sir. And I can't trace the oil line back from the main feed unless we stop engines."

"All right, Chief," said Ericson, making up his mind to it. There was no possible alternative. "I'll send a signal, and then ring down for you to stop. Be as quick as you can."

"I'll be that, sir."

They were just in visual touch with *Viperous*, who was zig-zagging in broad sweeps across the van of the convoy. When *Compass Rose* signaled her news, the answer was laconic:

"Act independently. Keep me informed."

"Acknowledge," said Ericson briefly to Rose, who was signalman of the watch. Then: "Starboard ten. Stop engines," he called down to the wheelhouse; and *Compass Rose*, turning in a wide sweep away from the convoy, lost way and came gradually to a standstill. Up on the bridge they waited in silence, while the convoy steamed past them. Down below in the engine room, Watts and a leading stoker called Gracey set to work on their examination of the oil feed. The engine room was very hot and they were forced to bend nearly double to reach the suspect pipe. It was a full two hours before they had located the trouble — an L-shaped, curved section that appeared to be totally blocked.

Watts stepped backward and straightened up, holding the pipe in one hand and wiping his sweaty forehead with the other. "Now what?" he said rhetorically. "How do we find out what's inside this?"

"Suck it and see, I suppose," answered Gracey, who was a lower-deck comedian of some note.

"Get a piece of wire," said Watts coldly. Some people were allowed to be funny to Chief E.R.A.'s but leading stokers were not included in this licensed category. "Not too thick . . . I'm going up to report to the Captain."

After two more hours of steady work, they were still no further on. Whatever had got inside the pipe seemed to be stuck there immovably: it couldn't be blown out, it couldn't be pushed through, it couldn't be melted or picked to pieces. Waiting on the bridge of his useless ship, Ericson found it hard to restrain himself from storming down to the engine room and telling them to stop loafing and get on with it; but he knew that this would have been futile, as well as unfair. He stood wedged in a corner of the bridge, staring down at the dark oily water.

At four o'clock, with the last ships of the convoy now out of sight below the horizon, Ericson had sent a signal to *Viperous*, explaining what was happening; there had been no answer beyond a bare acknowledgment, and it was clear that *Viperous* was trusting him to make the best of the repair and to rejoin as soon as possible.

Compass Rose was entirely motionless: her ensign hung down without stirring, her vague shadow on the water never moved or altered its outline. She was waiting for two things—for her engine to start again, and for the other thing that might happen to her, without warning and without a chance of defending herself. Who knew what was below the surface of the dark sea, who knew what malevolent eye might be regarding them at this moment?

On the quarterdeck aft, some of the hands were fishing. If Ericson had told them that they were fishing in at least a thousand fathoms of water, as was in fact the case, it would probably have made no difference. Fishing—even with bread-crumbs dangling 6000 feet above the ocean bed—was better than doing nothing, at a moment like this.

Down below in the engine room, Chief E.R.A. Watts had come to a certain decision. It involved considerable delay, and some danger of wrecking everything beyond repair; but there was no choice left to him.

"We'll have to saw the pipe up," he said to Gracey, at the end of another futile bout of poking and picking at the obstruction. "Bit by bit, till we find the stoppage."

"What then?"

"Clear it out, and then braze the whole thing together again."

"Take all night if we do that," said Gracey sulkily.

"Take all the war if we don't," retorted Watts. "Get a hacksaw, while I tell the Captain."

The repairs did not take all the night, but they took many trying hours of it. Watts had to cut the oil pipe eight times before he found the exact point of obstruction; this was at the joint of the elbow, and consisted of a lump of cotton waste hardened and com-

pressed into a solid plug. The question of how it got there gave Watts half an hour of abusive and infuriated speculation, and left Leading Stoker Gracey, along with the rest of the engine-room complement, in sullen contemplation of the whole system of naval discipline. But time was not there to be wasted: even as he raged and questioned, Watts was working swiftly on the pieces of piping, brazing them together again into the same length and curve they had had before. Finally the whole pipe was cleared and smoothed off, and they set to work to coax it back into position again.

Outside, dusk had come down, and then the night. With its coming, the Captain ordered extraordinary precautions against discovery: Lockhart went round the upper deck three or four times to insure that the ship was properly darkened and that no chink of light would betray them: the radios in the wardroom and the mess decks were closed down, and stringent orders given against unnecessary noise: the boats were swung out, ready for lowering, and the lashings of the rafts cast off — in case, as Tallow put it morbidly, they had to make a rush job of swimming.

There was nothing to do except wait. Watch succeeded watch: the hands tiptoed delicately to their stations, instead of clumping along the deck or stamping their sea boots on the iron ladders, as they usually did: *Compass Rose* floated motionless, with the black water occasionally slapping against her side: a brilliant quartermoon hung in the mid-Atlantic sky, showing them all the outlines of their hazard.

Only once during that night was there an interruption of their vigil, but it was an interruption that startled them all. In the stillness that followed the change of the watch, just after midnight, breaking harshly in upon the sound of lapping water, there was a sudden burst of hammering from below, a solid succession of thuds that resounded throughout the ship. Everyone came to attention, and looked at his neighbor in quest of reassurance: secretly they cursed the men working in the engine room, for reawakening

their fear and their hatred. The noise could be heard for miles around. . . . On the bridge, Ericson turned to Morell, who had just taken over the watch.

"Go down and see Watts," he said crisply. "Tell him to stop the hammering or to muffle it somehow. Tell him we can't afford to make this amount of noise." As Morell turned to go, Ericson added, less formally: "Tell him the torpedo will hit him first."

That was perfectly true, thought Morell, as he climbed down successive ladders deep into the heart of the ship. He could not help feeling a comradely admiration for the men who had been working patiently, ten feet below the surface of the water, for so many hours on end: it was part of their job, of course; but the cold-blooded hazard involved in working below decks in the present circumstances seemed to demand a special category of nervous endurance. If a torpedo came, the engine-room crew must be an instant casualty: they would have perhaps ten seconds to get out as the water flooded in, and those ten seconds, for a dozen men fighting to use one ladder in the pitch darkness, would mean the worst end to life that a man could devise.

The hammering stopped as he slid down the last oily ladder to the engine room itself, and Watts, hearing his step on the iron plating, turned to greet him.

"Come to see the fun, sir? It won't be long now."

"That's my idea of good news, Chief," answered Morell. No settled naval hierarchy could ever make him address Watts, who was nearly old enough to be his grandfather, with anything save an informal friendliness. "But the Captain's a bit worried about the noise. Can you do anything to tone it down?"

"Nearly finished now, sir," said Watts. "We were putting one of those brackets back. . . . Could you hear the hammering up top?"

"Hear it? There were submarines popping up for miles around, complaining about the racket."

There was a short laugh from the handful of men working round the oil pipe: down there, even the funniest jokes about sub-

marines were only just funny. . . . Morell looked round the circle of faces, harshly lit by the naked hand lamp clipped to a nearby stanchion: they all shared the same look, the same factors of expression — tiredness, concentration, fear in the background.

"Seems like we're sitting up and asking for it," Watts said grimly. "If they don't get us now, they never will."

"How much longer, Chief?"

"Couple of hours, maybe."

"Longest job we've ever had," said Gracey. "You'd think it was a bloody battlegewagon."

"Me for barracks, when we get in," said an apprentice E.R.A. named Broughton. "I'd rather run the boilerhouse at Chatham than this lot."

"Who wouldn't?" said Spurway, the smallest and usually the drunkest stoker. "I'd rather clean out the dockside heads, any day of the week."

Morell suddenly realized how intensely nervous they had all become, how far they had been driven beyond the normal margins of behavior. He said: "Good luck with it," and started up the ladder again. At the top the stars greeted him, and then the black water. A small chill wind was stirring, sending quick ripples slapping against their sides. Alone in the dark night, *Compass Rose* lay still, waiting.

In the cold hour that stretched between two and three a.m., with the moon clouded, and the water black and fathomless as sable, a step on the bridge ladder. But now it was a different sort of step: cheerful, quick-mounting, no longer stealthy. It was Chief E.R.A. Watts.

"Captain, sir!" he called to the vague figure hunched over the front of the bridge.

Ericson, stiff and cold with his long vigil, turned awkwardly toward him. "Yes, Chief?"

"Ready to move, sir."

So that was that, thought Ericson, standing up and stretching

gratefully: they could get going, they could make their escape. The relief was enormous, flooding in till it seemed to reach every part of his body: he felt like shouting his congratulations, seizing Watts' hand and shaking it, giving way to his lightheaded happiness. But all he said was: "Thank you, Chief. Very well done." And then, to the voice pipe: "Wheelhouse!"

"Wheelhouse, bridge, sir!" came the quartermaster's startled voice.

"Ring: 'Stand by, main engines.'"

Very soon they were off: steaming swiftly northward, chasing the convoy: the revolutions mounted, the whole ship grew warm and alive and full of hope again.

At about six o'clock, with the first dawn lightening the sky to the eastward, they "got" the convoy on the very edge of the radar screen. Lockhart, who was Officer of the Watch, looked at the blurred echo appreciatively: it was still many miles ahead, and they would not be in direct touch till midmorning, but it put them on the map again—they were no longer alone on the waste of water that might have been their grave.

The morning watch progressed toward its ending at eight o'clock: Lockhart's thoughts wandered: he responded automatically as the quartermaster and the lookouts changed for the final half hour of the watch: suddenly he jerked to attention as the bell rang from the radar compartment.

"Radar — bridge!"

Lockhart bent to the voice pipe. "Bridge."

The voice of the radar operator, level, rather tired, not excited, came up to him. "I'm getting a small echo astern of the convoy, sir. Can you see it on the repeater?"

Lockhart looked at the radar screen beside the voice pipe and nodded to himself. It was true. Between the convoy and themselves there was now a single small echo, flickering and fading on the screen like a guttering candle. He watched it for half a minute before speaking. It was never more than a luminous pin-

point of light, but it always came up, it was persistently *there* all the time: it was a contact, and it had to be accounted for. He bent to the voice pipe again.

"Yes, I've got it. . . . What do you make of it?" Then, before the man could answer, he asked: "Who's that on the set?"

"Sellars, sir."

Sellars, thought Lockhart: their Leading Radar Mechanic, a reliable operator, a man worth asking questions. . . . He said again: "What do you make of it?"

"Hard to tell, sir," answered Sellars. "It's small, but it's there all the time, keeping pace with the convoy."

"Could it be a straggler?"

"It's a bit small for a ship, sir. Do you see the ship right out to starboard — probably one of the escorts? That's a lot bigger."

Lockhart stared at the radar screen. That, again, was quite true. On the edge of the convoy pattern, away to starboard, was a single detached echo that was probably a corvette; and it was appreciably bigger than the speck of light they were querying. He found himself hesitating, on the verge of reporting the strange echo to the Captain. It could be a fault in the set, which was not yet clear of its teething troubles: it could be a straggler from the convoy (though its size was against it): it could conceivably be a rain-storm. Or it could — it *could* — be something that they really wanted to see. . . . After watching for a full two minutes, while the echo strengthened slightly, maintaining level pace with the convoy as before, he said to Sellars: "Keep your eye on it," and then he crossed to the Captain's voice pipe and pressed the bell.

When he came up to the bridge, knuckling his eyes and rubbing his stiff face, Ericson was not in the best of tempers. He had had a bare four hours' sleep, interrupted now just because (as he phrased it to himself) there was a bloody seagull perched on the radar aerial and the First Lieutenant hadn't got the sense to shoo it away.

"Who's the radar operator?" he asked.

"Sellars, sir."

Ericson bent to the voice pipe, and cleared his throat with a growl. "Radar!"

"Radar — bridge!" answered Sellars.

"What about this echo?"

"Still there, sir." He gave the range and the bearing. "That makes it about ten miles astern of the last ship of the convoy."

"Nothing wrong with the set, is there?"

"No, sir," said Sellars, with the brisk air of a man who, at ten minutes to eight on a cold morning, was disinclined for this sort of slur, even coming from a bad-tempered captain. "The set's on the top line."

"Have you had an echo like this before?"

There was a pause below. Then: "Not exactly, sir. It's about the size we'd get from a buoy or a small boat."

"A trawler? A drifter?"

"Smaller than that, sir. Ship's boat, more like."

"H'm. . . ." Ericson looked at the radar screen again, while Lockhart, watching him, smiled to himself. It was clear that his bad temper was fighting a losing battle with his acknowledgment of Sellars' competence: "Sound Action Stations," he said, straightening up suddenly. And to the wheelhouse, in the same sharp voice: "Full ahead! Steer ten degrees to starboard."

Lockhart opened his mouth to speak, and then snapped it shut again. Taken by surprise, he had been about to say something silly, like: "Do you really think it's a submarine, sir?" The loud, endless shrilling of the alarm bells all over the ship, and the thud of heavy boots along the decks and up the ladder, gave the best answer of all to this foolish speculation. . . . He stood by the battery of voice pipes, conscious of more than the usual excitement as the various positions were reported to him and he acknowledged the reports. After a swift glance round him, and fore and aft, a final check for his own satisfaction, he called out, "Action Stations closed up, sir!" Then he dropped back to his own charge, the asdic set: the killing instrument itself, if one were needed. . . . Under-

neath them, as if conscious of her weight of tensed and ready men, *Compass Rose* began to tremble.

Ericson was watching the radar screen. His call for Action Stations had been not much more than an impulse: he could even admit that it might have been prompted by irritation, by the feeling that, if he himself had to be awake, then no one else on board was going to go on sleeping. But certainly they had picked up an odd-looking echo, one of the most promising so far: it was possible that this time they were really on to something, and in that case the full readiness of *Compass Rose* was a solid comfort. Momentarily he raised his binoculars and peered ahead, but the morning mist lay all round the horizon and there was nothing to be seen. He looked down at the radar screen again, and then bent to the voice pipe. "Report your target."

Sellars gave the range and the bearing of the contact. Whatever it was, it was still moving at the slow convoy speed, and they were overhauling it rapidly.

"It's gaining strength a bit, sir," he concluded. "Same size, but a firmer echo. Must be something pretty solid."

That was what the picture on the radar screen showed. The whole convoy had emerged now: a compact square of ships, with the outlying escorts showing clearly, and the small stranger swimming along behind. . . . Ericson had begun to believe in it; for the first time, he felt he was watching a U-boat behaving according to the book — trailing a convoy just out of sight, perhaps after an abortive night attack, and waiting for dusk to come again before moving up for another attempt. But what this U-boat, lacking radar's watchful eye, *didn't* know about was the straggling escort left behind, the ship outside the picture which was hurrying in to spoil it. If they could just get within range before they were spotted. . . .

Compass Rose ran on; the whole ship was expectant, pointing toward her target. If it were a U-boat, then they were building up toward the best chance of the war so far: it was the thing they

had been waiting for, the point of all their endurance; the next hour could make sense of everything. All over the upper deck, the men standing-to were cheerful in their hope: the word had gone round that they were chasing something definite, and a steady leakage of information from the radar room fed their expectation. And on the bridge, every man who had a pair of glasses—the Captain, Wells, the two lookouts—strained toward the horizon, and the promise that might break from it at any moment.

Compass Rose ran on: the bow wave creamed under her forefoot, the boiling wake spread behind her, whipping against the wind with rough impatience as she drove toward her prey. A pale sun melted the mist and set the waves sparkling for ten and fifteen miles ahead: a pale sun, a strengthening sun, a cheerful sun which was on their side and had come up to help them. The rigging began to whine: the trembling of the bow plating as it thrust and divided the water could be felt all over the upper deck: by the depth-charge rails, the pulse of the screw against the racing sea made the whole afterpart vibrate. After last night's protracted helplessness, it was good to reverse the roles and to be launched on this swift stalking hunt.

Compass Rose ran on. "Report your target!" said Ericson, for the fifth or sixth time: from below, Sellars' voice, excited and jubilant, confirmed the dwindling range, the certainty of a lively rendezvous. For Ericson, it was as if the whole ship were gathering herself together under his hand, getting wound up taut for the spring: it was a fanciful thought, such as he sometimes had when he was very tired or very tense: he felt the ship under him as the rider feels the horse, and he felt glad and proud of her ready response. It was for this that they had waited so long and sweated so hard. . . . He crossed to the compass platform, took an exact bearing from the last radar report, raised his glasses, and stared along the line.

Almost immediately he saw it.

It was a square speck of black on the horizon: it was the con-

ning tower of a U-boat. Even as he looked at it, it lifted to the long swell, and he saw at its base a plume of white—the wash thrown off by the submerged hull. Far ahead of it, to complete the picture, there were some stray wisps of smoke, the telltale marks of the convoy that was betraying itself from over 20 miles away. He straightened up and whipped to the front of the bridge.

“Morell!” he snapped.

Morell looked up. “Sir?”

“There’s a U-boat on the surface, dead ahead. Far out of range at the moment. But be ready. We want to get a couple of shots in before she dives—if we can get near enough.” Ericson half-turned toward Lockhart: as he did so, Signalman Wells, who was standing by his side and staring through his binoculars, called out:

“I can see it, sir—dead ahead!” His voice was high with excitement, but almost immediately his professional sense pulled him back to normal again. “Shall we send a sighting report, sir?”

“Yes. W/T signal. Warn the office.” He gathered his thoughts together. “Take this down: ‘Admiralty, repeated to *Viperous*. Submarine on surface ten miles astern of Convoy TG104. Course 345, speed five knots. Am engaging.’” He turned toward Lockhart in the asdic cabinet. “Number One! There’s a—”

Lockhart put his head out of the small window, smiling widely. “I kind of overheard, sir,” he answered. “Too far away for me, at the moment.”

Ericson smiled in answer. “We’ll need that damned box of tricks before very long. You can stand by for the quickest crash-dive in history, as soon as they see us.”

“Sir,” said Lockhart, “let’s make the most of it while their trousers are down.”

All over the ship, the next few minutes were intense and crowded. The warning of immediate action was passed to Feraby on the depth charges aft, and then to the engine room. “Crack it on, Chief!” said Ericson crisply, down the voice pipe: “We’ve only got a certain amount of time to play with.” *Compass*

Rose began to romp across the sea toward her target: under pressure from the last few pounds of steam, she seemed to be spurning the water in a desperate attempt to close the range before she was discovered. Through Ericson's glasses, the square speck of the conning tower was bigger now: it had gained in detail, it had a variety of light and shade, it even had the head and shoulders of a man—a man silhouetted against the hard horizon, a man gazing stolidly ahead, ludicrously intent on his arc of duty.

The distance shortened: Sellars' voice rose steadily up the scale as he reported the closing range: presently a totally unfamiliar bell rang on the bridge—the bell from the four-inch gun—and Morell, with the air of a man presenting his compliments, said:

"I think I could reach him now, sir."

The range was four sea miles: eight thousand yards. It was a long shot for a small gun, it might spoil the whole thing; but surely, thought Ericson, that stolid man in the conning tower *must* turn round, and see them, and say either "*Donnerwetter!*" or "*Gott in Himmel!*" and take the U-boat in a steep dive down to safety. . . . He delayed for a moment longer, weighing the chances of discovery against the limitations of the valiant pop-gun that was their main armament; then he leaned over the front of the bridge, and nodded permission to Morell.

The roar of the gun could hardly have followed more swiftly: Morell's finger must have been hovering very near the trigger. . . .

It was a good shot, even with the help of radar to do the range finding, but it was not good enough for their crucial circumstances; the spout of gray-white water that leapt skyward was 30 yards ahead of the U-boat—the best alarm-signal she could ever have had. The man in the conning tower turned as if he could hardly credit his senses, then he ducked down, as if plucked from below, and the conning tower was empty.

In the expectant silence, their gun roared again: Ericson swore aloud as this time the shot fell short, and the tall column of water unsighted them. When it fell back into the sea, and their

vision cleared, the U-boat was already going down, at a steep angle, in a fluster of disturbed water.

Whatever the state of her lookouts, she must have had her crash-diving routine worked out to perfection. In a matter of seconds, the hull and most of the conning tower were submerged: Morell got in a third shot before the surface of the sea was blank, but in the flurry of her dive it was difficult to spot its exact fall. It seemed to land close alongside: it might have hit her. She was moving to the right as she disappeared.

Ericson shouted: "She's down, Lockhart!"

Almost immediately, Lockhart answered: "In contact. . . ."

The pinging echo of the asdic contact was loud and clear, audible all over the bridge: Lockhart watched in extreme nervous excitement as the operator settled down to hold onto it: they could not lose it now, when the U-boat had been right before their eyes a few seconds ago. . . . *Compass Rose* was moving very fast, and he had to prompt the operator once as the U-boat seemed to be slipping out of the asdic beam: the man was sweating with excitement, pounding with his fist on one edge of his chair. "Moving quickly right, sir!" Lockhart called out, and nodded to himself as Ericson laid a course to cut the corner and intercept. He rang the warning bell to the depth charges aft: they were now very near, and the sound of the contact was merging with the noise of the transmission. This was the moment when luck could take a hand: if the U-boat chose her moment rightly, and made a violent alteration of her course, she might slip out of the lethal area of the coming explosion. There were a few more seconds of waiting, while they covered the last remaining yards of the attack; then Lockhart pressed the firing bell, and a moment later the depth charges went down.

The whole surface of the sea jumped as the pattern exploded. The columns of water shot high into the air: it seemed unfair—scarcely believable, in fact—that the shattered U-boat did not shoot up at the same time, so sure were they that they must have hit her.

. . . As *Compass Rose* ran on, and the shocked sea subsided, they were left staring, voiceless with expectation, at the great patch of discolored water that marked the explosion area: they were waiting for the U-boat to break surface and surrender.

Nothing happened: the ripples began to subside, and with them their foolish hopes: in anger and amazement they realized that the attack had been a failure. "But damn it!" swore Lockhart, speaking for the whole ship, "we *must* have got her. The damned thing was *there*. . . ." "Get back on that search," said Ericson shortly. "We haven't finished yet." Lockhart flushed at the rebuke, which could not have been more public: he felt raw enough already, without the Captain giving the wound an extra scrape. He said: "Search 60 degrees across the stern," and bent to the asdic set again: almost immediately, they regained the contact, 50 yards from where they had dropped the depth charges.

Compass Rose turned under full helm, and raced in for her second attack. This time it was simpler: perhaps they had done some damage after all, because the U-boat did not seem to be moving or making any attempt at evasion. "Target stationary, sir!" reported Lockhart as they completed their turn, and he repeated the words, at intervals, right down to the very end of their run-in. Once more the depth charges went down, once more the enormous crack of the explosion shook the whole ship, once more they waited for success or failure to crown their efforts.

Someone on the bridge said: "Any minute now. . . ."

The U-boat rose in their wake like a huge unwieldy fish, gleaming in the sunlight. A great roar went up from the men on the upper deck, a howl of triumph.

The U-boat came up bows first at an extraordinary angle, blown right out of her proper trim by the force of the explosion: clearly she was, for the moment, beyond control. The water sluiced and poured from her casings as she rose: great bubbles burst round her conning tower: gouts of oil spread outward from the crushed plating amidships. "Open fire!" shouted Ericson—

and for a few moments it was Baker's chance, and his alone: the two-pounder pom-pom, set just behind the funnel, was the only gun that could be brought to bear. The staccato force of its firing shook the still air, and with a noise and a chain of shock like the punch! punch! punch! of a trip hammer the red glowing tracer shells began to chase each other low across the water toward the U-boat. She had now fallen back on a level keel, and for the moment she rode at her proper trim: it was odd, and infinitely disgusting, suddenly to see this wicked object, the loathsome cause of a hundred nights of fear and disaster, so close to them, so innocently exposed.

The two-pounder was beginning to score hits: bright flashes came from the U-boat's bows, and small yellow mushrooms of cordite smoke followed them: the shells were light, but the repeated blows were ripping through her pressure hull and finding her vitals. As *Compass Rose* came round again, listing sharply under full helm, the machine guns on her bridge and her signal deck joined in. The U-boat settled a little lower, and men began to clamber and pour out of her conning tower. Most of them ran forward, stumbling over the uneven deck, their hands above their heads, waving and shouting at *Compass Rose*; but one man, more angry or more valiant than the rest, opened fire with a small gun from the shelter of the conning tower, and a spatter of machine-gun bullets hit *Compass Rose* amidships.

Then the counterfiring ceased suddenly, as the brave man with the gun slumped forward over the edge of the conning tower: the rest of the crew started jumping overboard — or falling, for *Compass Rose's* guns were still blazing away and still scoring hits on men and steel. Blood overran the U-boat's wet deck, darkly red against the hated gray hull: she began to slide down, stern first, in a great upheaval of oil and air bubbles and the smoke and smell of cordite. A man climbed halfway out of the conning tower, throwing a weighted sack into the water as he did so: for a moment he wrestled to get his body clear, but the



dead gunner must have jammed the escape hatch, for the U-boat disappeared before he could free himself. A final explosion drove a cascade of oily water upward: then silence. "Cease fire," said Ericson, when the sea began to close in again and the surface flattened under a spreading film of oil. "Wheel amidships. Stop engines. And stand by with those scrambling nets."

The wonderful moment was over.

For one man aboard *Compass Rose* it had been over for some little time. A young seaman, one of the victorious pom-pom's crew, had been killed outright by the lone machine gunner on the U-boat; the small group of men bending over his body, in compassion and concern, was out of sight behind the gun mounting, but they made a private world of grief none the less authentic for being completely at variance with the rest of the ship.

The remnants of the U-boat's crew swam toward the safety of *Compass Rose*. Many of these, in an extremity of fear or exhaus-

tion, were gasping and crying for help: still exalted by their triumph, the men aboard *Compass Rose* began to cheer them ironically. "These are my favorite kind of survivors," said Morell suddenly, to no one in particular. "They invented the whole idea themselves. I want to see how they perform."

They performed as did all the other survivors whom *Compass Rose* had picked out of the water: some cried for help, some swam in sensible silence toward their rescuers, some sank before they could be reached. There was one exception, a notable individualist who might well have sabotaged the whole affair. This was a man who, swimming strongly toward the scrambling net that hung over the ship's side, suddenly looked up at his rescuers, raised his right arm, and roared out: "*Heil Hitler!*" There was a swift and immediate growl of rage from aboard *Compass Rose*, and a sudden disinclination to put any heart into the heaving and hauling that was necessary to bring the survivors on board. "Cocky lot of rats," said Wainwright, the torpedo man, sullenly; "we ought to leave them in to soak. . . ."

Lockhart, who was standing on the iron deck overseeing the rescue work, felt a sudden spurt of rage as he watched the incident. He felt like agreeing with Wainwright, out loud: he felt that the Captain would be justified in ringing "Full ahead" and leaving these men to splash around until they sank. But that was only a single impulse of emotion. "Hurry up!" he called out, affecting not to notice the mood of the men round him. "We haven't got all day. . . ." One by one the swimmers were hauled out of the water: the man who had shouted was the last to be lifted out, and he had his bare foot so severely trodden on by Leading Seaman Tonbridge, not a light-treading character, that he now gave a shout of a very different sort.

"Less noise there!" said Lockhart curtly, his face expressionless. "You're out of danger now. . . . Fall them in," he added to Tonbridge: and the prisoners were marshaled into a rough line. There were 14 of them, with one dead man lying at their feet: the crew

of *Compass Rose* stood round in a rough semicircle, staring at their captives. They seemed an insignificant and unexciting lot: water dripped from their hands and feet onto the deck, and above their nondescript and sodden clothes their faces were at once woe-begone and relieved, like very bad comedians who have at least got through their act without violence from the audience. No heroes, these: deprived of their ship, they were indeed hardly men at all. The crew of *Compass Rose* felt disappointed, almost tricked, by the quality of those whom they had first defeated and then salvaged from defeat. Was this, they thought, really all that was meant by a U-boat's crew?

But there was still something about them, something that attacked the senses and spread discomfort and unease, like an infected limb in a sound body. . . . They were strangers, and their presence on board was disgusting, like the appearance of the U-boat on the surface of the sea. They were people from another and infinitely abhorrent world—not just Germans, but U-boat Germans, doubly revolting. As quickly as possible, they were searched, and listed, and hidden below.

ERICSON had ordered the German captain, who was among the prisoners, to be put in his own cabin, with a sentry on the door as a formal precaution; and later that morning, when they were within sight of the convoy and steaming up to report to *Viperous*, he went below to meet his opposite number.

The German was standing in the middle of the cabin, peering somewhat forlornly out of the porthole: he turned as Ericson came in, and seemed to collect himself into some accustomed pattern, the only one that the world deserved to see. He was tall, dead-blond, and young—nearly young enough to be Ericson's son; but thank God he was not, thought Ericson suddenly, noting the contempt that twitched his lips and nostrils, the sneer against life and the hatred of his capture by an inferior. He was young, but his face was old with some derivative disease of power.

"*Heil Hitler!*" began the German crisply. "I wish to—"

"No," said Ericson grimly, "I don't think we'll start like that. What's your name?"

The German glared. "Von Hellmuth. Kapitän-Leutnant von Hellmuth. You are also the captain? What is yours?"

"Ericson."

"Ah, a good German name!" exclaimed von Hellmuth, raising his yellow eyebrows, as at some evidence of gentility in a tramp.

"Certainly not!" snapped Ericson. "And stop throwing your weight about. You're a prisoner. You're confined here. Just behave yourself."

The German frowned at this breach of decorum: there was bitter hostility in his whole expression, even in the set of his shoulders. "You took my ship by surprise, Captain," he said sourly. "Otherwise . . ."

His tone hinted at treachery, unfair tactics, a course of conduct outrageous to German honor: suitable only for Englishmen, Poles, Negroes. "And what the hell have you been doing all these months," Ericson thought, "except taking people by surprise, stalking them, giving them no chance." But that idea would not have registered. Instead he smiled ironically, and said:

"It is war. I am sorry if it is too hard for you."

Von Hellmuth gave him a furious glance, but he did not answer. "This is a poor cabin," he said. "I am not accustomed —"

Ericson stepped up to him, suddenly shaking with anger. In the back of his mind he thought: "If I had a revolver I'd shoot you here and now." That was what these bloody people did to you: that was how the evil disease multiplied and bred in the heart. . . . When he spoke his voice was clipped and violent.

"Be quiet!" he snapped out. "If you say another word, I shall have you put down in one of the provision lockers. . . ." He turned suddenly toward the door. "Sentry!"

The leading seaman on duty, a revolver in his belt, appeared in the doorway. "Sir?"

"This prisoner is dangerous," said Ericson tautly. "If he makes any sort of move to leave the cabin, shoot him."

The man's face was expressionless: only his eyes, moving suddenly from the Captain to von Hellmuth, gave a startled flicker of interest. "Aye aye, sir!" He disappeared again.

Von Hellmuth's expression hovered between contempt and anxiety. "I am an officer of the German Navy —" he began.

"You're a bastard in any language," Ericson interrupted curtly. He felt another violent surge of anger. I could do it, he thought, in amazement at his wild feeling: I could do it now, as easily as snapping my fingers. . . . "I'm not particularly interested in getting you back to England," he said, slowly and carefully. "We could bury you this afternoon, if I felt like it. . . . Just watch it, that's all — just watch it!"

He turned and strode from the cabin. Outside, he wondered why he was not ashamed of himself.

HE SAT down in his chair on the bridge, and began a conscious effort to get back to normal. He realized that he was very tired. The tiredness and the revulsion of feeling meant that he hardly talked at all about the sinking of the U-boat: after the first excitement, he became taciturn, and Lockhart, who suggested a drink in the wardroom to celebrate, found himself virtually snubbed when Ericson said: "I don't think we ought to start drinking at sea." But Ericson was hugging close to him his pride and pleasure in their triumph. He did not share in the immense and uproarious excitement that pervaded the whole ship and could initiate a ragged burst of cheering from the mess decks at any hour of the day; but in the back of his mind, as in the minds of every man on board, was a clear sense of achievement — achievement crowning two whole years of trial and effort, and making up for every hated minute of them. They had worked very hard for that U-boat, they had endured every extreme of fatigue, boredom, eyestrain, cold and crude discomfort: now, at a stroke, the



slate seemed to be wiped clean, the account squared. But for Ericson, it was a private account: he did not want to share his new solvency with anyone.

Only once did he emerge from his emotional retreat. Later in the voyage, when they were near home, chance took them close alongside *Viperous*, and the flood of congratulations that came over the loud-hailer seemed to release some spring within him, unloosing a boyish sense of well-being and cheerfulness. He picked up the microphone.

"Would you like to see some Germans?" he asked *Viperous*, across 20 yards of water that separated them. "They're just about due for an airing. . . . Dig them out, Number One," he added aside to Lockhart. "Fall them in on the fo'c'sle."

Presently the first of the file of prisoners began to mount the ladder.

"They're a scruffy-looking lot," Ericson called out apologetically, as the men shambled into view, peering about them like mice leaving the shelter of the wainscot. "I think we ought to win the war, don't you?"



Nicholas Monsarrat



NICHOLAS MONSARRAT, son of a distinguished English surgeon, conducted his first love affair with the sea when he spent childhood vacations on the coast of North Wales. Later, at Cambridge University and while studying law, he kept up a sort of long-range courtship by reading all the seafaring literature available — especially the great novels of Joseph Conrad.

A few years later, Monsarrat deserted a promising law career to start writing the stories that were piling up inside him. He wrote four novels and many short stories before World War II gave him a chance to join the Navy and live at last on the seas that had always fascinated him. During the war he commanded two corvettes and a frigate in the Battle of the Atlantic, distilling his experiences in several books that were widely acclaimed both here and in England — notably *Leave Cancelled* and *H. M. Corvette*.

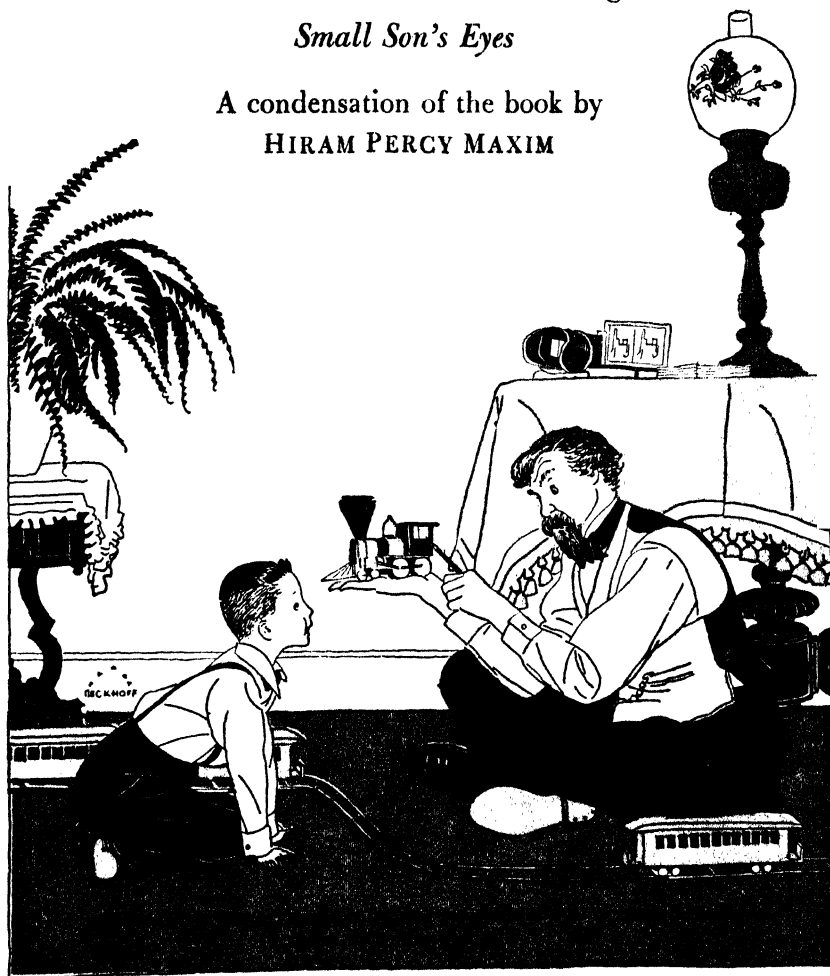
The Cruel Sea was written far from the scenes it describes, in a house on the high African veld near Johannesburg. There Mr. Monsarrat, now 41, married and the father of one son, is Director of the United Kingdom Office of Information.

Illustrations by Harry Beckhoff

A Genius in the Family

*Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim Through a
Small Son's Eyes*

A condensation of the book by
HIRAM PERCY MAXIM



THE *Genius in the Family* was the great inventor of the Maxim gun, Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim. As gifted at practical joking as he was at inventing, he was an amazing and wonderful man to have for a father; family life with him was sometimes bewildering and often hilarious, but it was never dull.

First published in 1936, Hiram Percy Maxim's story of his remarkable childhood is a classic of American home life which deserves its place in every library. Beneath its delightful humor there are lessons for every parent — as, for example, when Sir Hiram teaches his children arithmetic painlessly, or uses his own unique method of discipline. This is a book to read aloud, to the whole family.

"A book of charm and lasting humor, it belongs on the 'must read' list of all fathers."
— Robert Van Gelder in *New York Times*


"Utterly delicious." — *Chicago Tribune*

SO LITTLE is said in this book about the remarkable scientific achievements of its subject that a word of reminder is appropriate at the outset. Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim was one of the most brilliant and renowned engineers and inventors of his day. Born in Maine in 1840, he had less than five years of schooling. In his youth he took odd jobs as carriage painter and mechanic, meanwhile studying science and engineering furiously.

By the time this book opens (in the early 1870's) he was already a rising inventor. In 1878 he became chief engineer of one of the first electric-lighting concerns in the country. He narrowly missed being the acknowledged inventor of the incandescent lamp. Thomas A. Edison proved priority by only a matter of days.

His international renown came chiefly from his invention of the Maxim gun, the first efficient automatic gun; but he also made a fundamental contribution to development of the incandescent carbon lamp, and invented automatic gas-generating plants, steam and vacuum pumps, and numerous other useful devices. — PUBLISHER'S NOTE

MY FATHER had a brilliancy which sparkled, a cleverness and resourcefulness that placed him above any other man I ever knew. But he gave every evidence that he thought fatherhood was a means provided by nature for perpetrating humorous misconceptions upon inexperienced offspring. As the first of these offspring I was the butt of a host of amazing undertakings. I lived an utterly different sort of family life from that of any of my young friends. Having had no previous experience in being brought up, I was not conscious that there was anything unique about my situation, and it was not until my family gradually settled down to the conventional that I realized what an unusual life we had been living. I think that the following examples of clever invention, amazing audacity, extraordinary humor and passionate persistence of purpose (and heaven-born patience on the part of my mother) may be of interest outside the family. It is in this spirit that I present these scenes from the family life of my father.

N THE corner of our street in Brooklyn was a drugstore to which I was sent frequently on errands. The man in the drugstore owned a gentle little white dog which seemed to like me. We had no dog at our house. All we had was a very small baby which cried too much. One day I told the man in the drugstore that I loved his dog, and suggested to him that it would be very nice if he gave it to me. Indeed, I suspect that I suggested this several times. The drugstore man became impatient, finally, and one day told me to go out and find a penny with a head on each side and bring it to him and he would give me the dog. This seemed a simple thing to do, so I hurried home to get one.

I found my mother and asked her to let me see all of her money. When I told her why, she smiled and explained that the man was joking, that he had made the offer only because he knew there was no such thing as a penny with a head on both sides. My mother was wasting her breath. I insisted that we look over her pennies.

I remember how we argued as we went to get her purse; and how disappointed I was when I found that every one of her pennies had a head on one side only. I was thwarted, but by no means defeated. I made up my mind that my problem was above a woman's head and that I would be obliged to seek my father's assistance. He was a man and I was very sure that he could find me a penny with a head on both sides, for he could do wonderful things.

The rest of the afternoon was spent waiting for him at the corner. Finally he arrived. Running up to him, I asked him to look in his pockets and see if he had a penny with a head on both sides. Naturally he was astonished, but instead of showing his surprise and treating me as though I were a little child, he pretended to take the matter seriously. He fished out of his pocket all the coins he had, and selecting the pennies, we went carefully

over each one. They all had a head on one side only. He professed surprise at this and he went over them again to be sure. This encouraged me, for obviously he had expected to find a two-headed coin. Evidently they were to be had, which was precisely the impression he wished to convey to me.

He asked me casually what I wanted the penny for. I told him. "Well," said my father, "that ought to be easy. When I go over to New York tomorrow I will see if I can find one. They must have plenty of them over there."

I was very much elated. I knew my father would have no trouble with a little matter like this. He could do anything. When he left for New York the next morning I was careful to remind him about the penny. He assured me he would not forget.

The next day I thought late afternoon would never come. I had made up my mind just where I was going to have the little dog sleep, where he was going to have his meals, and what we were going to do together. In the meantime, a very busy man in New York, with heavy responsibilities, went into his factory toolroom, put a penny in a lathe and faced off the "tail" side of it until it was just half the thickness of a normal penny. He repeated the operation with another penny. He then soldered these two thin half pennies together, thereby producing a coin of normal thickness but with a *head on both sides*. When the edge had been burnished the joint could not be seen.

When he arrived that afternoon I was waiting at the corner. I ran out and asked him if he had found the penny. Acting as though he had forgotten the matter, but that on a chance shot he might have one among his other coins, he reached into his pocket and drew them out. There were several pennies, and looking at each one, he picked out one which had a head on both sides. I was for going and getting the dog forthwith, but my father suggested that we go home for supper first.

I can see my mother now, as we three sat at the table, she astounded at the double-headed penny, utterly unable to account

for it, but knowing it was a trick, while my father laughed at her. Knowing my father as she did, she must have said what I heard her say many hundreds of times in later years, "Now, Hiram, please don't do anything foolish and in bad taste." This all went over my head. What possible objection could my mother have to the proceeding?

After supper my father and I sauntered up to the drugstore. As we entered, my father hung back. Running up to the man, I held out my double-headed penny and told him I had come for the dog. The man took the penny, turned it over and over again, glanced at my father in a sheepish sort of way, and gave every evidence of being thoroughly taken aback. I suppose that this little scene was what my father had been looking forward to all day. The drugstore man asked me where I had obtained the penny. I told him that my father had given it to me. This involved the latter, who then stepped forward, asking what the difficulty seemed to be. The drugstore man held out the penny in a helpless sort of way, saying something about a joke. My father took the penny, glanced at it casually, and handed it back, saying that he could not remember having seen one like it before.

I asked if I was going to get the dog. To my complete dismay, the drugstore man indicated that I was not. My father did not put as much value on the dog as did I. He appeared to be involved in the legal aspects of the case. After a lot of talking, during which I thought him particularly stupid, because he knew perfectly the original terms of the bargain between me and the drugstore man, he appeared to discover the nature of the proposition for the first time. Having established this, my father summed up the difficulty. It appeared to him I had been offered a certain dog in consideration of my bringing in a penny with a head on both sides. It was now up to the drugstore man, he said, to fulfill his part of the bargain. Of course the drugstore man had not the slightest intention of giving up the dog. When this became clear my father told him sternly that he should be more careful about



making offers in the future, unless he proposed to live up to them.

We took our double-headed penny home. I was very much disappointed. It was my first contact with a broken pledge. My father did not take my view of the matter. He had had his little joke; the drugstore man had been given the surprise of his life and had been placed in an embarrassing position. That was all there was to it. The incident was closed.

WITH my father one never knew what was going to happen from one moment to the next. One Sunday morning he asked if I had noticed that the policeman on the beat spent an hour or so every Sunday in the arcaway of the house across the street. I had noticed it and I had also seen that the housemaid of the people opposite was involved in these visits. My father asked me what I imagined could be the trouble over there that they had to call the police every Sunday morning. I had on two or three occasions heard my father use the word "sparking," so I suggested that perhaps the policeman was sparking the housemaid. My father was amazed at my knowledge, for I was only five. I could see little crinkly lines appearing around his eyes and I knew that I had interested him.

He pretended to be concerned about the sparking business. We watched the policeman and the maid, and finally he said: "Percy, we ought to make them stop that sparking every Sunday morning. We cannot have this policeman spending his time sparking when he should be watching for bad people."

There seemed a certain virtue in this point of view, and I asked how we could stop them. Said he: "Of course, we can't go over there and tell them to stop sparking; but we could get a bean blower and blow beans at them." I asked what he meant.

"Well, I'll tell you," said he. "Between now and next Sunday I shall bring over from New York a long brass tube that will be nice and straight. It will be just big enough on the inside to accept a bean. Then we can get some beans from Mamma and blow

them over there and make him stop sparking the housemaid."

I gave my wholehearted support to the plan. I recall how funny he looked when he cautioned me not to tell Mamma about it because she would not understand. He was absolutely right.

When the next Sunday came around I had forgotten about the sparking business. But my father had not. When my mother had disappeared upstairs for the morning, he laid aside a drawing he was working on and, calling me, pointed across the street, remarking that they were at it again. That reminded me and I asked him if he had remembered to bring the brass tube. He said he had it in the closet where we kept our umbrellas, and that he had the beans, too.

After much shifting of furniture and adjusting of the window curtain we were ready to blow our first bean. I was very much excited. To my surprise, my father pointed the bean-blowing tube at the top of the building across the street. Putting his mouth to the tube, he sent a little white bean across the street where it struck the building about three stories up, directly over the areaway where the policeman and the housemaid were sparking. The bean bounced off the wall of the building and fell down into the areaway. Nothing happened, so my father blew another. It also fell into the areaway. It seemed to me to be a most curious way to go about smoking out a policeman. But I was wrong.

After half a dozen beans had been blown the policeman came out and looked hard at the windows over his head. It was then that I appreciated my father's strategy. By blowing the beans against the wall and high up, he made them appear to be coming from overhead. The policeman peered at all the windows, waiting for the unknown one upstairs to throw another bean, so he could catch him at it. But nothing came, my father being too clever to blow while the policeman was looking up.

Presently he went down into the areaway again, which was the signal for a perfect fusillade of beans. Out the policeman popped again, this time walking out to the sidewalk to gain a better view

of the windows above. But nobody was in sight, so the mystified man could only return to the areaway and the housemaid. He had no more than entered when the beans rained down again. This time he dashed out, thinking to be so quick that he would catch the blower. But there was somebody quicker than he was. He had not a chance in the world. He walked around this time in a most determined manner, my father in the meantime rolling around in gales of merriment. I remember that I thought it was a good joke, but that—like all my father's jokes—it was not entirely above criticism. It seemed to me to be playing with fire, this making a policeman the butt of the joke.

The policeman finally had to give up and return to the areaway. The instant his figure disappeared into the areaway another downfall of beans took place. He did not pop out so quickly this time. When he did come out he waved good-bye to the housemaid and came directly over to our side of the street. I thought he had detected us and I became alarmed. I suspect my father had a bit of a turn, because he rushed to the umbrella closet with the tube and the beans, and when he returned pretended to be hard at work on his drawing. However, the policeman had come across the street in order to obtain a good view of all the windows in the house opposite. He stopped directly in front of our window, not 15 feet from my father and me, and watched for several minutes before moving on.

We broke up that morning's sparking and several other sessions. Finally the policeman had to give up and do his sparking at other times. He never found out where the beans came from.

WE moved to Fanwood, N. J., in the spring of 1875. My father used to come out from New York on Saturday afternoons and remain with us until Monday morning. It was very much "out in the country" for us. We had a horse and carriage, a barn, a pig, some chickens and a cow.

One Sunday morning my father made the startling announce-

ment that he was going to hypnotize a chicken. He had been reading about it in a scientific paper. I had not the remotest idea what hypnotize meant, and when I asked him what it meant he said, "You know — sort of mesmerize him." The trouble with this explanation was that I did not know what "mesmerize" meant. I was just as much at sea as ever. However, I knew it would be interesting, and I determined to be on hand.

He said that he would need some chalk and a chicken, and that, considering Mamma's way of regarding matters of this sort, we had better perform the operation out in the barn. When I had found a piece of chalk we went out to the barn and cleared away a place on the floor. I could see that the hypnotizing operation was going to require a lot of space. Then we went out to where the chickens were. He asked my opinion about which one we'd better hypnotize. He was very apt to ask my advice on matters of this sort, consulting me at length as though I were his equal. I have no doubt that I was very earnest and that he extracted a lot of fun out of the naïve answers of a child not yet six.

I told him I couldn't tell which chicken would be best because I didn't know what he was going to do. Again he said, "Oh — you know — just mesmerize it."

This got us nowhere, so he selected a rooster without more ado and told me to chase him slowly, not to catch him, but to keep running him until he told me to stop. This was nothing less than a gift from heaven, for I was strictly forbidden to chase the chickens and it was something I dearly loved to do. Here I was being sent to do it!

I started to chase the rooster. At first he was very spry as well as thoroughly astonished, but after a few minutes his wind gave out. I kept steadily after him, and it was easy to see that he was utterly at a loss to understand what in the world had suddenly happened. When he showed signs of becoming groggy, my father called to me that that would be enough. He then caught the rooster, carried him into the barn and set him down on the barn



floor. He pushed the bird's head down so that his beak was close to the floor, and placed the chalk directly in front of his beak. Moving the white chalk back and forth a bit to attract the bird's attention, my father held the creature motionless a moment and then slowly drew a broad white mark about a foot and a half long on the barn floor straight out from the rooster's beak. Then he arose, walked around, and waved his arms, as though to shoo the rooster away; but the creature never moved. He remained absolutely motionless, squatted down, staring fixedly at the chalk mark.

My father explained to me that the chicken was hypnotized or

mesmerized. He wanted to see how long the bird would remain in that condition, so we sat down and watched it. I imagine we sat there for something like three minutes. Suddenly the rooster seemed to awaken from a sleep. He raised his head, looked around, gave a violent flap of his wings and ran out of the barn, cackling indignantly. My father, on the other hand, was delighted.

WE MOVED back to Brooklyn late in 1877 after purchasing a home on Union Street. I was considerably more of a boy by this time, and as I grew older it was natural that I should become more of a problem to my mother. My besetting sins were teasing my sisters and breaking things around the house. One day I accidentally broke a ceiling-height mirror in my mother's room.

When she beheld the damage she sank into a chair and wept. She told me that as things were going there was no living with me, and that she would have to turn me over to my father for a good whipping.

This was a brand-new idea to me. I could not remember that my father had ever laid a hand upon me.

That evening he was shown my latest and worst offense. He sank into a chair, held his head in his hands, rocked back and forth in exquisite agony, and gave several similar indications of being completely undone. He made it an extremely painful scene for me and I certainly did feel low in my mind. My mother told him that I was getting entirely out of hand and that he must give me a good whipping or I would break everything in the house. Father said that he would attend to it after supper.

Supper was a doleful affair. I had never sat through such a nerve-wearing ordeal before. I was in the deepest disgrace.

After supper my father announced that he would read his paper first and then take up the whipping matter. I wondered what it would be like to be whipped. My mother had spanked me aplenty, but I did not regard that as a whipping. I waited patiently, sitting in a deep gloom.

When my father had finished his paper he got up briskly, saying, "Well, now. Come along, Percy. Let's attend to this whipping business." He led the way out into the back yard where we visited my mother's shrubs and bushes from which a suitable whip was to be cut. My father had his pocketknife open, ready to cut a stalk that met the requirements. He explained to me that it was necessary to find one that had just the right length and thickness and straightness. If it were too short it would not have enough spring. If it were too long it would have too much spring and would break. If it were too thin it would be weak; whereas, if it were too thick it would bruise, which, of course, would not do.

We searched and searched without finding anything that just suited. I became interested in the problem and pointed out several sticks which appeared to meet the exacting specifications. After spending quite a time at it, my father finally decided that it was best to cut several and try them. He cut a long thin one, a long thick one, a middle-length one, and two other compromises. This made five whips. I was very much impressed with his technique. I could see that among all of the whips it was more than likely that one would be found which would suit much better than possibly could be the case were only one to be selected by guessing. I did not recognize it at the time, but I had received my first lesson in engineering research.

After all had been prepared and whittled down smooth, he said, "Now, come along and we will try them." He led the way to the third floor front, which was his room, and took off his coat, his collar, and necktie, and rolled up his sleeves. I was a bit concerned at this, for it suggested that a whipping must be something calling for considerable activity.

He laid the five whips on the bed and, taking one at a time, he smote the coverlet. The savage whir and the succeeding whack sounded all over the house. He put real muscle into it. The long thin whip broke. He explained that he had expected this to happen, for the stick was too thin for its length. The thick one made

a fearful whirl and whack when it hit the coverlet. We rejected this one because it was evident that it would bruise. Later on, I heard my mother say that she never suffered such horrible nervous strain in all her life, listening to the whirl of the whips.

When we had whacked the bed coverlet for a long time, testing the whips and breaking most of them, my father was far from satisfied. He outlined in his clear way the problem as it confronted us. "What we need is something fairly long, very strong, and yet very light. It must also be very springy. Where can we find such a thing?"

We thought and thought. By this time I was as keenly interested in the solution of the problem as though someone else were to receive the whipping. I suggested a baseball bat, pointing out that it would hit awfully hard.

"Oh, *much* too hard," he replied. "Why, you could break a man's back." He recoiled at the suggestion.

"I suppose a broomstick would be too stiff, too," I ventured.

"Altogether too stiff and too heavy. It would break bones."

There was a long pause while we both pondered. Then an idea occurred to me. "Gosh, Papa! I know the very thing. That thin cane of yours."

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "That's a good idea. Go and fetch it."

I hurried downstairs to the clothes closet. As I ran through the reception room, I passed my mother, who asked me what I was after. I answered: "We're trying to find a good whip. We're going to try the thin cane."

She asked something else, but I was much too busy to stop just then and explain. She said afterward that my being in such a hurry to find a cane with which to be whipped seemed one of the most extraordinary things she had ever heard of.

When I returned with the cane, my father whacked the coverlet with it with all his might. It made a particularly frightening noise. After whipping the bed coverlet until my mother was ready to fly out of her skin, my father shook his head and



asked me to try it. Getting the best grip I could, I struck the bed for all that was in me. It only made a fair noise and my father feared my mother might not hear it. He told me to put more "beef" into it. I wiped off my hands, took a fresh grip, and belabored the bedspread with all my might. When my father expressed disappointment over the weight of my blows, I explained that the cane's curved handle got in my way. My father was not satisfied and we went into executive session again.

It was quite apparent to me that we would have to do a lot of searching around to find exactly the right kind of whip. It must have appeared this way to my father, too, for he finally said, "Well, I guess we shall have to give up the whipping, Percy. We can't seem to find the right whip. But, anyway, you understand that you must be more careful around the house and that you must not make so much trouble for Mamma, don't you; and you will try to be a better boy, won't you, Percy?"

I was very deeply impressed by the way he said it. He was

asking me as a favor to him and to Mamma to do something. I realized that it would be very mean indeed of me to fail to do as he asked. And it would be meaner yet not to try to make things more pleasant for Mamma. So I said, "Yes, Papa, I will." And then we went downstairs and explained to Mamma that the whipping matter had to be called off. I am glad to be able to say that I kept my promise in pretty fair shape, as time proved.

WE HAD a peach tree in our back yard in Brooklyn. I had noticed that something grew on the tree, but it was so dried up that I could not imagine what it might be. One day I took one of the miserable specimens to my father and asked him what it was.

"That's a peach," he said.

"A peach!" I exclaimed. "I never saw a peach that looked like that."

"Well, it's not much of a peach, Percy; but, you see, our tree never has any fertilizer put on it, so it can't grow good peaches."

I thought about this very seriously. It seemed a pity to have a peach tree and not get any peaches off it, so I said: "Papa, how could we fix our tree so it would give nice peaches?"

Whatever led the man to answer as he did is more than I shall attempt to explain. He said: "Oh, I suppose the best thing to do is to get an old dead cat and bury it at the foot of the tree."

"An old dead cat!" I repeated in astonishment. "Would an old dead cat really make peaches grow?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! Grow like anything."

"Well, how long would it take them to grow?"

I suspect that he began to formulate a scheme at this point. Up to this time he had merely been idly answering my questions.

"Well, Percy, I should say that if you buried a good big cat under the tree today, you probably would have plenty of beautiful peaches tomorrow morning."

This sounded too good to be true. I expected him to say a year. If a fine crop of peaches could be grown from one day to another,

I proposed to find an old dead cat and bury it under the tree.

For the next few days I was constantly on the lookout. On Saturday morning, after searching several vacant lots, I finally found the carcass of a cat. It must have been dead a long time for it was very dry. But I hurried home with it and hid it temporarily in the back yard.

When my father returned home from business that afternoon, he brought a friend with him, which was disconcerting, as it broke up my plan for burying the cat. There was no way for me to bring up the matter that evening, so I decided to see my father about it as early as possible Sunday morning.

Immediately after breakfast next morning, he and his friend went out on the back stoop and sat down to talk. I had to get at my father somehow, and after much deliberation I went up to him, put my mouth to his ear, and whispered, "Papa, I've got the dead cat." He stopped talking and shot me a surprised look.

"*Dead cat*, Percy!" he exclaimed.

"Sh-h-h—" I warned. "Mamma will hear. You remember, Papa, don't you—the peaches?"

"O Lord! Why, of course—the peaches!" he replied. Then in a low voice and adopting my furtive manner, he whispered, "Where is it?"

"Down by the grape arbor under a box," I whispered back. In a low tone he told his friend that a dead cat was needed because, as everyone knew, if a dead cat is buried at the foot of a peach tree it brings peaches right out. The friend acquiesced and indicated that it was a well-known phenomenon. "Well, now, Percy," my father said, "I tell you what. You go and fetch the coal shovel and we will bury it right away. Then we shall wait and watch the peaches come out."

Things were working splendidly. I fetched the shovel and the three of us went out to the peach tree. My father started digging and I went after the dead cat. It was but a few minutes' work for him to dig a deep enough hole, after which we pushed the

dead cat in and covered it up. When the job was finished, I asked my father how long it would be before the peaches would grow. Looking at his watch, and casting a meaningful look at his friend, he answered: "Oh, sometime this afternoon. They ought to be pretty good by late afternoon, I should say."

Shortly after this my sister Florence and I left for Sunday School and were absent for a couple of hours. During this interval my father and his friend must have gone out and purchased a basket of very large peaches. They must have brought them home, climbed the peach tree, and stuck the peaches on the twigs of the tree. All this was entirely unknown to me.

Just before one o'clock little Florence and I came home, and I heard my father shout, "Percy! Percy! Come quickly!" I dashed out to the back stoop, knowing that something big had happened.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "The peaches are out!"

One look and I was staggered by the sight. The tree was loaded with peaches!

I made a rush for the tree and was up in it in a moment. Shouting to my mother to hurry and bring a basket, I began picking the fruit. I remember to this day my intense excitement and also my surprise at finding that the peaches were impaled upon the little twigs. I had not expected to find that they grew that way. I picked the peaches off, calling my mother's attention to the enormous size of them. It seemed to me I had never participated in anything so exciting in all my life. Presently they were all picked and I came down out of the tree. I was amazed. There was a full basket of peaches — which had come out of the same basket less than an hour before.

For several years thereafter I was completely convinced of the potency of the dead-cat treatment as a means of fertilizing peaches.

A TIME came when my mother grew concerned over my father's health. He had led a very active country life during his youth,

and his present city life with its days and nights of unremitting toil was beginning to tell upon even his rugged physique.

My mother urged him to take an hour's exercise daily in the open air, and so one evening at about seven-thirty he asked me to come along with him. We walked up to Court Street which was a business street and full of people at that time of the evening. When we got there my father said: "Let's get some exercise, Percy." With this he pulled his silk hat down upon his head, buttoned up his Prince Albert coat and, stepping into the middle of the street, started running toward City Hall with all his might.

I had all I could do to keep up with him, but I saw that he made much heavier weather of it than I did. He had a lot more weight to carry and the cobblestones were rough for him. We passed Sackett Street going like the wind. At Degraw Street the speed had slackened off perceptibly. Somewhere about Butler Street he became completely winded and stopped. He limped over to the sidewalk and leaned heavily against a post. He puffed like nothing human. I never saw a person so utterly spent. I waited in silence for the next move. In a few minutes he partially recovered, straightened his hat and wheezed something to the effect that we had better walk home slowly.

By the time we reached home he was quite lame, and looked as though he were very ill indeed. My mother was calmly reading in the reception room when we walked in. He went directly to her and, drawing up a chair very close to hers, he wilted into it. Startled, she exclaimed, "Why, Hiram! What's the matter?"

He had a queer way with him when he did not feel well. It was to gaze steadily and very gloomily into my mother's face at very close range, giving the impression that he awaited her assistance, or was about to burst into tears, or die. This he now did.

Deeply concerned, my excitable little mother repeated, "Hiram! What's the matter with you?"

Offering absolutely no response at all, he continued to gaze



sadly into her eyes. At last he lifted one leg limply and held out his foot to her, wheezing hoarsely, "Please take it off, Jane."

She pulled the shoe off the foot offered her, and then with a show of the greatest difficulty, as though his strength were fast ebbing, he held out the other foot. She pulled the shoe off and examined his feet. There seemed to be nothing wrong and, looking critically at his face again, she said, "Hiram, tell me what has happened."

He replied in a wheezy whisper, "You nearly killed me, Jane."

"I nearly killed you, Hiram! For mercy's sake, what did I do?"

After much grotesque gulping, which suggested a person in the last throes of something dreadful, he croaked, "*Exercise*."

"Did the exercise hurt your feet?" my mother asked. All she got from this was a very sickly nod.

"Does it hurt you to walk?"

His reply to this was to hold up both hands, roll his eyes to heaven, and then point to his stockinged feet, which he then managed to curl up and make appear frightfully deformed. My sensitive mother recoiled at those two "deformed" feet, not daring to look at them again. Convinced that she had a sick husband on her hands, she arose and in her decisive little way announced, "You must go right to bed this minute and I shall send for the doctor. Come along." She began assisting him to his feet.

At this he promptly regained his normal voice and said, quite briskly, "Jane, it was you who made me go out and exercise. It nearly killed me."

"For mercy's sake, what sort of exercise did you take?"

"I ran with all my might nearly down to City Hall with Percy for exercise. I simply could not run any farther."

"*Ran down nearly to City Hall!* What do you mean — *ran*?"

"Just ran. Did you never see anybody run, Jane?"

"Do you mean to tell me that you *ran* down Court Street to City Hall, Hiram?"

"We did just what you told us to do. Didn't we, Percy? You

told us we needed exercise, and we went out and got a lot of it in a few minutes. I did my best to get to City Hall for you, Jane, but my strength gave out. I don't think you realized how far it is to City Hall when you made me go out and run there."

Mother was speechless. After half an hour of blaming her for nearly causing his death, my father pulled on his shoes with vigor, gave her one of his bear hugs, and went to work on his drafting board. Poor lady! She lived an eventful life.

WHEN my sister Florence had been at school long enough to begin arithmetic, something happened and she could not go on. The child appeared unable to grasp what it was the teacher wanted her to do. Possibly it was the combination of a stupid and unimaginative teacher and an intensely imaginative and high-strung child.

After this difficulty had continued for some time, my mother was asked to call at the school to talk about her daughter's standing. The teacher informed her that Florence had exhibited a total inability to understand arithmetic. Manifestly the child was defective mentally.

If there be one thing which a mother will not believe, it is that her child is defective mentally. When she heard this, fire entered my mother's eye. She said she would take her daughter home, have a talk with her and bring her back to school. She served notice she would show all concerned that it was somebody other than her daughter who was mentally defective.

That evening my mother unburdened her soul to my father. "A child of mine defective mentally!" he snorted. He was for going over to the school and cleaning out the place. There was a long conference during which my mother got it across to him that the trouble had been with arithmetic, and if he would take a hand in the matter Florence might be brought out of her difficulty. He had pulled me out of a terrible difficulty which I had encountered in long division. He had made it such a fascinating

pastime that I used to divide enormous numbers by other enormous numbers just for the fun of doing it.

After supper he inveigled Florence into conversation about games and puzzles. I suspected this might be the beginning of something interesting, so I hung around. He suddenly directed his conversation at me, which was disconcerting until I realized he was talking at Florence through me. Finally, he said:

"I say, Florence, you ought to be the kind that enjoys arithmetic. You have such a clear mind that you would be good at it. It's lots of fun, when you play it the right way. Do you have arithmetic at your school?"

Florence was not enthusiastic. She indicated that they had arithmetic at her school but she did not like it.

"Oh, well, if you don't like it, then they are not playing it right. Let me show you how we used to play it when I was a boy. Percy, go down to the kitchen and fetch me a handful of beans."

This was enough for me. Something big was in the wind. I fetched the beans in a jiffy.

"Now, Florence, I'm going to play arithmetic with Percy first. After you see how we play it I shall play it with you, because I know you would play it better than most people. You are much smarter than most children of your age."

He placed ten beans in a vertical row on a sheet of paper. He then asked me to add up the beans and write down how many there were. I ran up the row and counted ten.

"All right," said he. "Now draw a line at the bottom and write down ten, so we won't be forgetting it." I did so.

"All right. That's easy, of course. Anybody can do that. Now I am going to make it a little harder."

He then laid down on the paper in a vertical row five groups of two beans each. "Draw your line and add those up," said he. I started to count them up one at a time, but he stopped me, saying, "Oh, no. That's too easy. You must add the piles. Two and two make four, four and two make six—like that."

I caught the idea, so I added them by piles, drew my line and wrote down "10." Florence was getting interested. I saw she was getting a new slant on arithmetic, as indeed I was also.

"Oh, well," my father said, "we shall catch him yet, shan't we, Florence?"

Florence's response was a grunt. Next he arranged two groups of four beans each and one little group of two beans. I had the scheme by this time, so I rattled off, "Four and four make eight, eight and two make ten."

"Let me do it now, Papa," said Florence.

This was exactly what he had been playing for, but he was not going to let her into the game too easily. "Let Percy and me finish," he said.

He must have slipped another bean into his hand at this juncture, for he laid down one group of seven beans and over this a group of four. I had not noticed that he had smuggled in an extra bean. Before he had the beans arranged, I started adding, "Seven and three make—"

"No, no," exclaimed Florence, her eyes flashing. "There are four beans there! That makes one more. *Eleven!*" she shouted, intent upon beating me to the answer. "It's eleven, isn't it, Papa?"

"Eleven?" my father questioned, as though surprised. "It always has been ten," and he winked at me.

Florence had her eyes on the beans and did not see the wink. "It's eleven beans, Papa. Don't you see? There are seven in that pile and four in that one."

"But we only had ten beans. How can it be eleven?"

Florence was sure, and when Florence was sure that ended it. "Papa!" she insisted. "How many beans are there all together? Count them."

He counted the seven group one at a time and continued with the four, ending up with eleven. He seemed to be completely mystified. Florence, her piercing eyes on his face, awaited his comprehension. But comprehension did not seem to come.

"Don't you understand, Papa?" she queried, with a touch of impatience at his slowness. Hesitatingly, he repeated, "Seven and four make —" He appeared to be stuck fast.

"Eleven," Florence prompted. "Can't you understand, Papa?" It was she who was giving the lesson in arithmetic now.

He removed one bean from the four group, as though struggling with the problem.

"That's ten now," she exclaimed, "because there are only three in that pile now."

"I guess you must be right, Florence, but let's go on." Florence cast a look at me which said, "Gee, but he's stupid."

Then he laid out eight beans in one group and two in the other. Both Florence and I shouted at the top of our lungs, "Eight and two make ten!" But before we could get it out of our mouths he slipped three more beans into the smaller pile. Florence and I stared at each other as we struggled to be first in performing the mental feat of adding three more beans. It was a dead heat. We shouted in concert, "Eight and five make thirteen!"

It is not necessary to review here how he led little Florence into adding up all sorts of combinations, gradually shifting into subtraction without her realizing it. We played the game all the evening, he being clever enough to keep changing it so that our interest didn't flag. My mother finally had to stop us so that Florence could go to bed.

The next day Florence was taken back to school by my mother. I do not know exactly what happened then, though I have always believed that my father's clever manipulation straightened out some preconceived notion that had been holding her back; but I do know that from that day on, until finally Florence graduated from high school, she stood number one in every one of her classes, except on three or four occasions when she slipped and had to accept number two. When she had to accept second place, she considered herself disgraced. It used to require the efforts of the entire family to lift her out of her gloom.

ONE OF the great troubles which pursued my father day and night was absent-mindedness. He insisted upon losing umbrellas, packages, books, and drawings, until finally he became desperate. In his characteristic way he once sought my sympathy. I was only a little boy, but all my life he had treated me as an equal, so it was entirely natural for him to come to me.

He held his head in his hands as he sat on the back stoop, sighed like a blast furnace, and remarked that he believed he would burst out crying. I had no desire to see such a terrible thing happen, so I sought to console him.

"What makes you feel like crying, Papa?" I asked.

"Oh, nobody cares about me, nobody helps me, everybody is cross with me when I lose my things."

Unless I cheered him up I could see that we would both be in tears. "We all love you, Papa. Mamma does, and I do, and Florence does, too."

"Yes, but that doesn't stop me from losing my things. Yesterday I lost my gloves. And today I lost a roll of very important drawings."

"Well, why don't you hold them in your hand, Papa? That's the way I do. I just hang right on to whatever it is all the time, and never put it down until I get home. Then I can't lose it."

"But the trouble is, I forget and I put it down, and then I walk away without it."

I had to admit that this was a difficult problem, but after a few moments' thought I offered a suggestion.

"Well, Papa, could you remember just one thing—just one single thing to do always?"

"I wonder if I could. What would it be, Percy?"

"It seems to me that if you had a piece of paper with your name on it, and if you could remember to put it on everything when you first pick it up, then when you lost it somebody would find it and send it to you."

"Well, now, Percy! That's an excellent idea." He was surprised



and immensely pleased at my having exhibited enough imagination to formulate a solution of a baffling problem.

He was so impressed with my idea that he immediately had paper labels printed which I remember clearly. They were approximately the size of small baggage tags and bore the interesting inscription:

THIS WAS LOST BY A DAMNED FOOL NAMED
HIRAM STEVENS MAXIM
WHO LIVES AT 325 UNION STREET, BROOKLYN
A SUITABLE REWARD WILL BE PAID FOR
ITS RETURN

He used these labels until he seemed to have tied one on everything we owned. My mother finally lost her patience and vetoed their further use.

ONE DAY I saw in Crandall's toy store a small stationary steam engine. It was a little bit of a thing, having a copper boiler which would hold not more than a quarter of a teacup of water. It had a diminutive alcohol lamp under the boiler and a single oscillating engine on top. It was a very primitive steam engine, but it was real and it would run. When my father came home that evening I told him about it. "Gosh, Papa, you ought to see it! It has a little flywheel and all!"

My enthusiasm was so overpowering that he put down his paper and regarded me with that quizzical expression which made him look as though he were trying not to laugh.

"Oh, I've seen those engines. The engine has a lead flywheel on one end of its shaft and a grooved pulley on the other end. Is that right?"

"Yes, that's right. Gee, Papa, but couldn't we have fun if we had one!"

"Do you know what the grooved pulley is for?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered. "You put a string on it and run the string to another wheel and it makes the other wheel go. They have a little toy factory down at Crandall's and all the machines are made to go by strings and wheels from one engine. Gosh, Papa! You ought to see all the things they have there."

"Is it open at night, do you suppose?" asked my father, still with that quizzical look.

"I don't know, wait till I ask Mamma," and I was off like a wild thing for my mother upstairs.

"Mamma, do you suppose Crandall's is open at night?"

"Crandall's? Only on Saturday nights."

When Saturday evening came I brought up the engine again and my father happened to be in the mood, so we set out for

Crandall's. I was so excited I could not walk; I had to skip and jump. Arrived at the store, I pointed out the engine in the show window and he took a good look at it.

"Let's go inside and see what it's like," he finally remarked. Things were coming along beautifully. I never had induced him to go into a store that he did not buy me something before he got out.

A young woman waited upon us and my father told her we had come in to look over their steam engines. She brought out samples of every steam engine they had.

My father, the chief engineer of the United States Electric Lighting Company, pleaded ignorance of machinery, and he quickly had the young lady so completely tangled up with his questions that I had to step in and prompt her. She was not at all well informed about steam machinery. When I explained a detail to her I recall that she and my father exchanged glances and smiles and it was not very long before I found myself explaining the engines to both of them. My father appeared to be intensely interested but particularly stupid.

"Do you have to bother with putting water in it to make it go?" he asked. I was too excited to realize that I was being led on.

"You have to have water to boil if you want any steam, Papa. You have to have water in the *Flirt's* boiler, don't you?"

"The *Flirt* is our steam launch," my father felt called upon to explain to the saleswoman. Then to me: "Oh yes. But the *Flirt* is a *steamboat*."

I thought this about as weak an argument as could be devised. "SteamBOAT!" I exploded. "What's that got to do with it, Papa? It's the steam engine in the boat that makes the boat go. The steam is for the engine—not the boat," and I shot him a sharp look of impatience.

"Oh!" he answered uncomprehendingly.

"Did you think the steam pushed against the boat and made it go?" I asked, exasperated and eyeing him intently.

"Well—I—something pushes against the boat, Percy, or it wouldn't go."

"Gosh, Papa! When you boil water and get steam, you let the steam go into the steam engine and it makes the engine go, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"When the steam engine goes, it makes the propeller go, doesn't it?"

"Yes—but—"

"But what?"

"It seems—I should think—never mind. Go ahead."

"Well, when the propeller goes, it pushes against the water and this makes the boat go ahead. Everybody knows that, Papa."

By this time I suppose my eyes were flashing and my voice had become very loud and penetrating, for I remember that we were the center of all eyes in the store.

"That's all right, if you have a boat; but this is not a boat," my father insisted, picking up the smallest of the engines, idly twisting the little flywheel and looking very silly.

"Of course it's not a boat. It's an engine, Papa. But it will go if you put water in the boiler and light the lamp. Anyway, I can make it go."

"Are you sure you can make it go, Percy?"

"Yes, Papa, I'm sure."

At this point he nodded to the saleswoman and she wrapped the engine up and handed it to me. When we got home my father explained the penalty when too much water is put into the boiler, or too little water, and for failure to blow out the lamp before the last bit of water is boiled away.

As he talked on I found, to my surprise, that he suddenly knew much more about the engine than I did.

I played with this engine for a long time, learning every minute detail of its construction. I must have impressed my parents with my genuine love and appreciation of it, because the day came

when my father bought me a little steam locomotive, a train of cars and some track.

It was the high point in my life up to this time. I actually owned my own steam locomotive and railroad! But the point is that I had already been trained to understand how it worked. I played regularly with this little steam train for many years, and never injured the boiler or any of the delicate machinery.

IN later years my father designed and built the first of those millions of guns which were to be known the world over as Maxim guns. He offered this gun to the United States War and Navy Departments, both of which declined it on the ground that it was impractical — little more than an interesting and ingenious mechanical curiosity. This reception on the part of his fellow countrymen wounded him deeply; he took his gun to England and offered it to the British War Office, which took it up. He formed the Maxim Gun Company, which in 1896 was merged with the English armament firm of Vickers. In the War of the Sudan his gun covered itself and its inventor with glory; at the battle of Omdurman it was one of the big factors in saving the day for the British. In 1900 he became a British subject; in 1901 he was knighted by Queen Victoria. He became internationally known and occupied a position of great importance and dignity.

At one time during the height of his glory it was observed by some of his associates that he went out every evening about seven-thirty and did not return until about nine-thirty. His associates had come to know him and his characteristics, and it was agreed that this mysterious absence every evening had better be investigated, lest Sir Hiram be led into doing something foolish. And so he was trailed one evening and seen to enter a building in the business district of London. About nine o'clock he came out and returned home.

Investigation disclosed that he had hired a front room in the top of the building. When the room was searched the only things



found were a chair, a long brass tube, and a bag of black beans. Had I been one of the investigators I would have solved the mystery the moment I saw the brass tube and the beans.

It so happened that the Salvation Army paraded every evening in this part of London and held a meeting on the opposite side of the street. For some time complaints had been made to the police that someone was disturbing the Salvation Army group by dropping beans upon them. The beans always came from directly overhead and it was thought that some miscreant in the building in front of which the meetings were held was guilty of tossing out the beans. However, careful watch had failed to disclose anyone throwing beans, and a search of the building produced no evidence. Where the beans came from was an unsolved mystery.

Those who were trailing Sir Hiram kept a watch on the window of his room, and it was thought that he was seen at the window at times; but nothing was thought of this until some one picked up one of the beans

which had been thrown at the Salvation Army and found it was the same kind of bean that Sir Hiram had in the bag in his room. That was enough. Sir Hiram was the bean-thrower. He was making use of the same trick he used when he was a young man and lived in Brooklyn; he had been blowing the beans at the upper part of the building opposite, so that they bounced off and fell vertically, thus giving the impression that they were coming from directly overhead.

A session was held with Sir Hiram and it was explained that he had better give up this bean-blowing practice before he was discovered. He gave it up; but I knew he had enjoyed himself mystifying the Salvation Army people and having all the blame laid at the door of the occupants across the street. The use of black beans should be noted. It was impossible to trace their flight in the dark.



Hiram Percy Maxim



HIRAM PERCY MAXIM, though he modestly says nothing of his own career in *A Genius in the Family*, was a worthy member of the fabulous Maxim tribe, which included not only his father, Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim, but also his uncle, Hudson Maxim, inventor of smokeless powder. Hiram Percy himself was responsible for the Maxim silencer. He graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1886 at the age of 17, invented one of the first automobiles in his early 20's, and for some years designed the Columbia cars for the Pope Manufacturing Co.

By 1912 he was already famous for his invention of the silencer and was deep in radio, with an amateur station of his own. He was first president of the American Radio Relay League, and, later, of the Amateur Cinema League. On the side, with typical Maxim energy, he sailed his own yachts and was keenly interested in aviation.

Unlike his explosive and eccentric father, Hiram Percy Maxim was a serene, easygoing man, with a gentle humor that shines through his books. (He wrote *Horseless Carriage Days* as well as *A Genius in the Family*.) His marriage was idyllic — a fact sadly attested when he died of a sudden illness in 1936. Mrs. Maxim, though she had been in perfect health, lived only a month without him.



Monarch of Goddess Island

A condensation from "The Plunderers" by

GEORGES BLOND

Translated from the French by Frances Frenaye



*"The Plunderers," copyright 1951 and published at \$3.50 by
The Macmillan Co., 60 Fifth Ave., New York 11, N. Y.*

“MONARCH of Goddess Island” pictures a primitive drama of survival which has been re-enacted every year for countless centuries on those desolate, misty islands in the Northern Pacific where the fur seals go each spring to breed. Ogloph, the powerful bull seal who rules the largest harem on Goddess Island, is the model of his kind: in this stirring account of his migrations, battles and ultimate fate the reader is brought close to a phenomenon which is one of the great, recurring wonders of Nature.

“Monarch of Goddess Island” is a short selection from *The Plunderers*, Georges Blond’s remarkable novel of a seal-hunting expedition, which has been hailed in Europe, where it was first published, as a modern classic.

“This is not a ‘nature book.’ It is a work of art.”

—Edgar L. Acken in New York *Herald Tribune Book Review*

“Its picture of life on the islands of the Bering Straits has much of the realism of a straight documentary . . . what lingers in the reader’s mind is Nature and her inscrutable ways.”

—*The Saturday Review of Literature*
Syndicate

OGLOPH, the big seal, was swimming toward the north. The herd of which he was a part, composed of a hundred or so males at the peak of their powers, was moving along at about 12 knots. They had left the waters of Japan at the 35th parallel and swum straight east until they reached the center of the Pacific, finding abundant food on the way. One day, toward the middle of April, they turned directly to the left and aimed at the North Pole.

The muscles of Ogloph's chest and shoulders made his fore flippers move in regular rhythm, and he went through the water without consciousness of any effort. He felt in complete harmony with the sea, plunging into it and gliding up again in a single curved motion to the surface, where he took a breath for all the world like a man swimming the crawl, except that he swam four times faster.

The physical superiority of the fur seal to other marine mammals is evident when we watch him swim. The ease with which he moves through the water is amazing. When he has a great distance to cover he swims with a continuous, rolling motion, curving in and out of the water like a porpoise. He uses only his fore flippers, while the hind ones are joined together like a fish's tail to serve as a rudder.

The whale is more impressive, and the shark can attain greater speed; but neither one can swim with his head above water, where he can survey the surroundings, or stretch out on his back for a rest, negligently fanning his face with one flipper. When a herd of seals makes a halt in the middle of the ocean, their big heads with drooping whiskers cause them to look like an assembly of benevolent mandarins. Then, moved by a drop in the temperature or a feeling that it is time to go, the seals give up

their relaxed and reflective pose, and, becoming fish, resume their way. They forge powerfully ahead, without pause.

Ogloph, at the age of 15, had been in his prime for about nine years. Never before had he been so agreeably aware of his own strength. Now he was swimming in the first line of the adult males. Ogloph knew that he was going north, and that when it was time for the females to arrive there he would have a function to perform. He knew this with a certainty more absolute than if he had deduced it with human intelligence.

All seals migrate in the spring of the year, spend the summer on the North Pacific islands and reproduce their kind. The first arrivals, full-fledged adults, robust and courageous, land within the first ten days of May, by the fifteenth at the latest. From whatever part of the Pacific they come, they all arrive on time. They have no chart to show them the way, no log to measure their speed, and their eyes are far too weak to distinguish the North Star, or any other. Unlike whales, seals are not attracted by plankton or given to swimming after it in order to obtain food. They find nourishment in various parts of the ocean, but the northern islands are not among them. Nor is sexual instinct their guide, since the females are still hibernating along the coast of California when the males start toward the north. Wherever they may be, they know that they must reach the islands early in May; and they make plans to do so. On exactly the right day, neither too early nor too late, the herd finds the right direction and starts on its way, without hesitation, carrying out the will of the Creator.

Ogloph had been swimming toward the north for several weeks when his highly developed sense of smell told him that he was near land. Under a heavily clouded sky the sea was still churning up fragments of drifting ice, and the fog allowed no more than two miles of visibility. The seals occupied a small circle to themselves; they continued to advance, but more slowly, swimming for a while like porpoises and then lifting their heads above the water. Finally, as the smell of the land became stronger they

broke formation, and Ogloph rested his flippers, letting himself be carried by the swell. Just ahead of him an elongated shape — Goddess Island — surged out of the fog. There was a rocky plateau, cut by low valleys and bordered by 60-foot cliffs, impregnable except for an occasional indentation. At the foot of the cliffs lay a narrow beach made up of crumbled rock and gray, almost black, lava sand. The general effect was one of utter desolation. Cormorants and gulls wheeled about with hoarse cries in the gray sky, while phalaropes and northern geese picked their way along the beach.

Ogloph made his way into an inlet and was now motionless in the water, with his head raised to look severely about him. The other seals had scattered in the same way and were, like him, in a state of expectation. It looked as if, now that they were there, they were hesitant about going farther. Ogloph was the first to reach a decision. He shook his head, gave a big sneeze, and with a few resolute strokes swam ashore. A goose jumped over the pebbles and stared at him out of one inquisitive eye.

Ogloph was about six feet long and weighed almost 500 pounds, a fur seal quite different from anything seen in a circus or zoo. The fur seal of the Pacific cannot endure captivity. When he is forced into it he refuses to eat and perishes of starvation. He belongs to a world of a certain order, and he does not leave it until the time has come for him to die.

Ogloph gazed up at the cliffs, like a newly arrived tourist, looked back at the beach and his still hesitant fellows, and then walked slowly across the pebbly sand.

Some writers have said that the fur seal can run as fast as a man but, if he does so, 50 yards are enough to exhaust him. His normal pace is a walk, and no ordinary walk at that. Just look at Ogloph walking. You will notice at first only the movement of his front limbs, which he advances one after the other with the flippers flat on the ground, like a man walking on his hands and dragging the rest of his body behind him. But Ogloph does not drag his

body. At every other step he arches his spine in such a way as to pull his two hind flippers under him, joined together; two more steps and his spine straightens out, only to arch again immediately after. This gait may sound awkward and uneasy, but in practice it is natural, supple, flowing, and easy on the eye. All the while the animal's neck is rigid, and his head held high in the air.

After he had walked for about half an hour, Ogloph went back to the sea to sleep. He stretched out on his back about a hundred yards offshore and closed his eyes. For most of the day he continued to doze, staying in the same spot by virtue of an almost imperceptible movement of his flippers and warned by his sense of smell of any change of position or the approach of a foreign body. After ten days he fell into the habit of taking a short nap on the beach at the end of his walk. Geese and phalaropes gathered around to look at his great scarred body, but Ogloph's nose told him he need not wake for so little reason. Yet, no matter how deep his sleep, the approach of another seal never failed to rouse him. New arrivals came from the south every day. The density of the fog made it impossible to spot them as herds, but there were more and more of them all around the island.

Between the 25th and the 30th of May there was a change in the weather. The heavy gray clouds lightened and the sky took on a white color above a mass of glistening mist. This was the season Ogloph liked best. The lichens on the cliffs shone with drops of condensed moisture, the ice of the ponds had melted, grass and wild wheat were beginning to sprout on the plateau. Ogloph undertook a deliberate tour of the beaches. He found all the inlets populated with seals, who were now passing an increasing amount of time on the sand. When he got back to his own landing place he decided it was time to stake a definite claim.

Just beyond the high-water mark he chose an area of sand and pebbles twice as large as a boxing ring, without any visible boundary. The idea of a boundary must have been strongly imbedded in Ogloph's mind, because as soon as he had chosen this place he

began to patrol its irregular perimeter, casting stern looks about him and occasionally emitting a grunting sound. This exercise he carried out several times a day. The rest of the time he passed in the middle of his domain, alert at the prospect of any intrusion. Since the moment of his landing he had not had a mouthful of food.

The other seals had staked their claims in the same way, spreading out from the water's edge toward the foot of the cliffs until eventually there was no room left at all. Nevertheless the influx of newcomers continued.

The first seals to arrive had been the largest, strongest and most courageous of the lot, males over seven years old with a weight, like Ogloph's, of some 500 pounds, and they had taken possession of the shore. Some of the later arrivals were not so husky, and they stayed at the water line, not quite daring to go farther. But some of them were strong and bold. They went very near another seal's boundary and defied him. This meant that they sat down a few yards away, stared hard, roared, thrust their heads forward and shook them from side to side or lowered them almost to the ground like tigers ready to spring. The squatters stared back at them scornfully, without moving, emitting an occasional grunt in answer to the persistent roaring. Eventually the roaring irritated them, and they walked down to the boundary, where they too thrust their heads forward and roared in a threatening and outraged manner. The roars of defiance and the angry responses made a deafening noise which continued all day long and into the night.

Ogloph had been approached by several cocky challengers, but none of them had yet dared to step over the boundary line. However, the influx of more and more seals to the beach made it plain that things must come to a bad end. Excitement had reached a high pitch, and combat had broken out in more than one quarter, when Ogloph saw one of the new arrivals advancing obliquely across the beach, aiming straight at him. He knew at once that

this hothead would not merely challenge him from a safe distance. He was resolved to fight to the death for his claim.

The ritual phase of the challenge was now at hand. Ogloph and his opponent stood face to face, close to each other, thrusting their heads forward and roaring. This went on for some time, but one detail was enough to guarantee that the clash would not peter out simply: the challenger had stepped over the boundary and trespassed on Ogloph's domain. He and Ogloph advanced slowly toward each other, still roaring. Suddenly their roaring ceased, for they had simultaneously flattened themselves out on the ground.

The seals' mouths were open, and their lips curled back over their gleaming canine teeth. Their heads darted forward in a succession of crisscross snakelike feints, accompanied by a sound like the panting of two straining locomotives. A warm, gray vapor came from their mouths and rose like steam in the air.

The feints came faster and faster. Ogloph knew exactly where he wanted to strike. From the start of a fight he always sought to create an opening for his one decisive stroke: an attack on one of the fore flippers. This was the classic blow, and the cautious manner of Ogloph's adversary showed that he also knew it and was on guard.

Now they both gave a long roar of anger. The panting was over, they had raised their heads from the ground and their enormous bodies were engaged, amid spurts of blood and flying bits of fur. The seals around them had fallen silent and stared with fascination at the picture of courage and ferocity before them. The aggressor had drawn one fore flipper under him in time to evade Ogloph's blow, and they had bitten each other on the neck. Their sharp canines had dug deep into the flesh and left ugly wounds, but neither seal paid these the slightest attention. Roaring fiercely, Ogloph spit out a big piece of flesh and skin.

Now the clinch was broken, and the adversaries stood once more face to face, panting and exhaling vapor. Ogloph tried

*Steven Behrens*

again to create an opening, succeeded, and struck out at the fore flipper. But the other withdrew it in time, and once more they locked their bodies in close combat. Ogloph had witnessed many fights in which this infighting had been repeated ten or twenty times, with intervals during which the wearying animals had tried to catch their breath. He had seen such fights go on hour after hour until they were ended by the death of one or both seals from sheer exhaustion. He felt himself strong enough to outlast any other seal, but he had usually managed to finish his fights quickly. In the course of the second breathing space he saw that

his adversary's feints had lost something of their speed. Then he knew that his chance was coming. At the first opening he dived for the other's right fore flipper, caught it in his jaws and bit it with all his might.

Ogloph felt his opponent fall over him, biting his back and shoulders. With his teeth sunk in Ogloph's neck, he rolled back, pulling Ogloph with him. But still Ogloph hung onto the flipper. His adversary bit again into his neck and pulled farther back in an attempt to shake him off. Then, breathless, he let go, and a second later Ogloph did the same. Once more they stood apart, face to face. Panting hard, Ogloph lowered his neck and shoulders for a new attack, but the other did not even try to imitate him. He turned his head to the right as if the sight of Ogloph were more than he could bear, then wheeled and limped painfully away. In his wake a stream of blood was absorbed by the black sand. Ogloph made no effort to pursue him. He was not too tired, and he had no fear of picking up the fight again, but such were the rules of the game. His adversary had surrendered and quit the disputed ground. There was no good reason to go after him.

There were holes and deep tears in Ogloph's neck, back, and shoulders and in places hanging strips of lacerated skin. But all this seemed not to disturb him. He did not lick his wounds, as any other animal would have done, for seals ignore such lesions. Ogloph knew that the healthy climate of Goddess Island and the absence of flies insured quick healing. He went back to the center of his claim and looked around in a satisfied manner at the witnesses to his triumph. He sat very straight, raised his head, and fanned himself with his right fore flipper. The longer the other seals remembered his victory the better. But he knew that more defensive battles lay ahead.

Between the first and the twelfth of June, Ogloph fought no fewer than forty battles. All through this period combats took place on every one of the beaches ringing the island. On the twelfth, toward noon, all fighting ceased. All available space on

the beaches was occupied, and there was no longer any question of ownership. Most of the original squatters had kept their claims. The challengers suffered heavy losses. Those that did not die retired to the edge of the water. No member of either side had had anything to eat since arriving at the island.

After his last combat Ogloph was a terrifying sight. His fur was ragged and bloody, a long shred of skin hung down from the tip of his nose and his right eyelid was torn so badly that he could hardly close it. He was pitiful to look at and, although the expression on his face was fiercer than ever, he gave signs of being very tired. But three days later he had made a complete recovery. He squatted on his claim with a proud and satisfied air, sniffing now and then in the direction of the open sea. He could not really see or smell anything. But, like all his fellows, he knew that soon the females would arrive.

THE FEMALE or cow seals, who have spent the winter off the California coast, reach the islands during the latter half of June and the early days of July. They arrive in very small numbers at the start. Sometimes the first one is alone. She comes out of the sea, a shiny little siren, and looks fearfully at the multitude of males with all their eyes upon her.

The female fur seal of the North Pacific is only one sixth the size of the male. She weighs between 80 and 85 pounds, and her fur is lighter in color. When she comes out of the water it is dark gray, with olive lights; as it dries it takes on the marvelous hue of burnished steel. Unfortunately, exposure to the air detracts from this beauty. In a few days the fur looks reddish brown, a little lighter on the throat and belly. But the female seal never ceases to be among the most graceful of animals. Her eyes are large and dark blue, bordered with long lashes, and extremely gentle and expressive; her head is slender and delicate, and she makes ges-

tures of the most engaging kind. When she perches on a rock, with her head tilted slightly back, fanning herself with one fore flipper, no male seal can resist her.

Soon the females begin to arrive in increasing numbers. They take a preliminary look at the beaches, swim back out to sea, then return to the shore to find the spot that suits them best, and there each one is taken in charge by the male proprietor. All these ladies are about to bear baby seals, of which they are in fact delivered between six and forty-eight hours after their arrival. This explains why they are greeted by the males in an atmosphere of relative calm.

At almost the same time the bachelors come upon the scene. The bachelor seals are between two and five years old. Up to the age of three they look very much like the females; then they put on weight and rugged masculine ways. Between five and six years they become young bulls. They have then attained sexual maturity and are just as large as the full-grown males, but have not yet the courage to battle for a piece of shore and set up a harem. For this reason they stay with the bachelor crowd and spend most of their time in play. Their playgrounds, which naturalists call "hauling grounds," are on the plateau, inland from the beaches.

The youngest bachelors play among themselves like puppies. A favorite game is for one seal to push another off a rock into the sea, only to be pushed off himself a moment later. This pastime is subject to endless and good-natured repetition, and obviously serves as training for combat when they are older. The bachelors are also champion swimmers. With amazing suppleness and speed they race about among the islands, plunging in and out of the waves, and at times seeming to dart over the surface like flying fish.

In order to reach the sea or to return to the plateau, the bachelors must cross the area held by their elders, generally known as the rookery. Usually the proprietors of the harems, by agreement, leave a passageway for their younger brothers. Here, if their be-

havior is all it should be, they may go to and fro unmolested, while the proprietors keep a watchful eye on the young bulls who are their only possible rivals.

It is clear by now why, after the arrival of the bachelors, the atmosphere is one of only relative calm. Their games are disturbing enough, and their use of the passageways is bound to give rise to incidents. Often a hardy young bull will try to pick off a female as he goes by, thereby incurring the wrath of her proprietor, who pursues him with vocal abuse the length of the passage.

Occasionally, the owner of a harem is lustfully attracted by the arrival of a new female on the beach and leaves his own ground in order to seize her. Seeing a group of females left unguarded, some neighbor may be tempted to appropriate one of them (which he does by delicately picking her up in his mouth and carrying her head downward); and then he in turn is apt to discover that the same kind of attack has been made on those he left behind him. Hence, a certain amount of disorder and even battle, but nothing comparable to the original struggle for possession of the ground. Such secondary quarrels are inevitable until all the females have reached the island — about the 14th of July.

There is one group of seals distinct from the full-grown males, females, bachelors and young bulls. This is composed of "reserve" bulls, full-grown specimens who arrived too late to obtain a foothold on the beach or who have not resigned themselves to defeat in the first struggle. They hold a line back of the rookery and by means of occasional sudden raids upon it often manage to build up small harems of their own, which they defend jealously.

AMONG the other mammals that give birth once a year, there is a gestation period of nine months, or almost nine months. In seals the period of gestation is a whole year, and five or six days after the females are delivered of their young they are pregnant again. This remarkable feature of seal life is made possible by the fact that the female seal has a double uterus.

Matka, who belonged to Ogloph's harem, gave birth to her little one 24 hours after her arrival. The delivery took only two minutes. At once Matka cut the umbilical cord with her teeth and freed him of the membrane in which he was enveloped. She leaned over him sniffing, but did not either lick him or dry him off. The pup's head was large in proportion to his body and his eyes were wide open. Almost immediately he began awkwardly to wriggle his little body and flap his flippers. Matka bleated over him like a ewe and seemed considerably excited. A female neighbor came to see what was going on, and Matka bit her until she went away. Then Ogloph came to investigate. He leaned over the little one, sniffed him, and gave a somewhat disgusted snort. Obviously he was not a very expansive father and, besides, there was no reason to suppose that the baby was his; he was just one more tiny seal, like all the others. The pup lay on a sloping stone, and his every movement caused him to slide. Matka took him by the scruff of his neck, like a cat holding a kitten, and put him beside her. She pushed his head in the direction of her teats, and he began to suck.

The baby seal had shiny, almost jet-black skin, with a brown spot on the throat and a whitish one on the head. His eyes were large, meltingly affectionate, and as heavily lashed as his mother's. His mother did not leave him for some time, and nursed him often. Three or four days later his appetite fell off, and Matka had an urge to bathe. On her way to the water she adroitly eluded the advances of some young bulls stalking the shore line. Once she was in the sea, she stretched out lazily and closed her eyes for a little while with a beatific expression; then she shook herself and scrubbed her whole body conscientiously with her flippers. After completing this toilet she felt hungry and set out for a fishing ground, leaving the island behind her. Seals' fishing grounds are never just offshore, and the nearest to Goddess Island was 100 miles to the southwest. For Matka, an unhurried 20-hour round trip.



When Matka came back next day she hurried with excited bleats toward the wriggling mass of pups gathered in one corner of Ogloph's domain. Thirty bleats responded to hers, but she immediately recognized that of her own offspring and brushed the others aside in her hurry to feed him. After several excursions to the fishing ground she returned one day to find that her baby had left his usual station, and she hastened to look for him in an enormous band of a thousand or more of his contemporaries who were disporting themselves at the far end of the beach.

As the pup grows and has less need for milk his mother goes more and more frequently into the water; but every time she

comes back she recognizes her own by his voice, even among a thousand others. Failing after her absence to find him in his usual place, she searches for him among the larger bands to which his new instinct of gregariousness has attached him. She makes a bleating noise, listens for his answer, and then pushes her way through the other pups to his side. If he is asleep when she first calls and cannot hear, she takes a short nap herself before trying again.

As long as they stay on the islands the young seals have no food other than their mothers' milk. Each one feeds only from his mother, and she refuses her milk to any other pup than her own. The pups are weaned in September, and after that they eat fish. When the full-grown seal is at a fishing ground he eats enormously. As many as 155 cuttlefish have been found in a seal's stomach, and sometimes there are pebbles which have apparently been swallowed in order to crush the fish bones.

The full-grown male squatters stick to their claims from the day when they first take possession until the end of the mating season, around the tenth of August, which means that they have no food for three or four months at a stretch. This is all the more amazing in view of their feverish activity. They live on their fat, and the inactivity of their digestive system does not seem to affect them. But in this long period of enforced fasting they often lose as much as one third of their weight.

The seals that crowd Goddess Island and the other seal refuges in the North Pacific must be counted by the hundreds of thousands. In July 1872, on St. Paul Island, which has a circumference of less than 44 miles and only 16 miles of beach, there were three million seals.

The noisy games of the bachelors, the bleating of great regiments of pups and the even louder bleat of their mothers, the grunt and roar of the full-grown males engaged in defensive battle—the sum of all these sounds is an immense clamor like that of a waterfall or a crowd in a football stadium. It can be heard several



miles out at sea. At the height of the season this noise goes on all day and all night. And yet each seal goes calmly about his own business. In the midst of the greatest confusion seals sleep nonchalantly or perch on the rocks with an air of supreme indifference, their heads thrown back and their eyes closed, fanning themselves with a flipper.

Ogloph reigned over 40 wives, a more than honorable number, in fact the largest on Goddess Island. Many of his companions had no more than 15 or 20, and those who occupied the second and third rows on the beach had fewer than a dozen. Ogloph ruled his harem firmly. If one of his wives tried to slink away without good reason (Ogloph knew very well what reasons were legitimate), he threw a warning grunt in her direction. If this did not stop her, he bowled her over with the tip of his nose or seized her by the scruff of her neck, just the way she carried her young. Humiliated and angry, the rebel might seek to defy him by biting his neck and chest. But her bites affected him no more than tickling, and he took her back to the others, none of whom dared soon again to transgress the unwritten law. Every now and then he made the rounds of his domain, herding the cows close together in the center, where they kept quiet and no one dared molest them. Then Ogloph would take a nap. He could never hope to sleep long, for the reserve bulls made bolder and bolder incursions. The need of being always on guard weighed upon him, for he was beginning to feel the effects of his prolonged fast and the summer sun. The cool rains were too far apart for his taste; sometimes the sun pierced the protecting mists for several days in succession. Obligated to stay on land, Ogloph did not care for this almost-blue sky.

At the beginning of July Matka suffered an accident. For several weeks cow seals had been arriving at the island in increasing numbers. If they had been equally distributed there would have been enough to go around among all the males, reserve bulls included. But the cows invariably chose to join the established

harems, and preferably the largest among them. Instead of looking for individual appreciation they hankered to belong to the bulls who were already rich and powerful. This is a very feminine point of view, and the males so flattered could not very well refuse to accord either favors or protection. As a result the reserve bulls became wilder and wilder.

One day a reserve bull bolder, or perhaps simply more exasperated than the rest, charged through the whole rookery area and fell upon Ogloph's harem. Ogloph attacked him almost immediately, but not before he had seized the first female within his grasp, who happened to be Matka. Matka was caught up and held six feet above the ground while her captor struggled to escape from Ogloph's teeth. When the kidnaper finally let her go rather than suffer Ogloph to cripple one of his fore flippers, the skin was torn off her right side like the peel of an orange. Even the layer of fat below the skin was hanging loose, and her ribs were exposed to the air. Any animal except a seal would probably have died from such a wound. Matka had a dislocated shoulder as well, which forced her to remain motionless for several days. This proved to be a blessing in disguise, for the complete rest contributed to the healing of her wound. Eventually she was able to give suck to her pup, who was seriously hungry. But more than a fortnight went by before she felt like fishing.

Meanwhile, Ogloph went through several other fights just as strenuous as those he had waged in defense of his claim. He was wounded in several places and had incurred the loss of one eye. One of his adversaries had noticed that the right eyelid was torn and had chosen to bite him in this unprotected spot. His other wounds did not affect him seriously, and they were quickly covered by scars; but the loss of his eye was a definite discomfort. In addition, the wind had blown sand into his other eye, leaving it badly irritated. Many seals suffer from their eyes in this way. Ogloph had occasionally seen seals that were totally blind — hulking and purposeless ghosts, unable to assert or defend themselves.

THE SEASON was far advanced. Ogloph had won a large number of combats, but he was feeling weary and in need of rest or change. The sight of the rookery, once so stimulating, now seemed to him tiresome and confused, and even the presence of his flatteringly large harem could not distract him. Matka, who still had great scars on her right side, occasionally climbed up onto a rock and, raising her deep-blue eyes toward those of Ogloph, rubbed her face against his. He was not altogether displeased by this show of affection, perhaps because he had fought for Matka and seen her grievously wounded. At the beginning of August, when she had completely recovered, she felt an urge to go to the fishing ground. Ogloph, too, was hungry. Already some of the other bulls had left their harems and gone to sea. Now he watched Matka weaving her way among the interested young bulls toward the water. He gave a grunt loud enough for her to hear and she stopped to look back. Stretching his neck, he looked after her out of his one remaining eye, grunted again, and then began to walk in the same direction. In a few seconds he had come to the boundary of his claim and crossed it. Leaving his harem behind him, he walked over the sand. Matka had gone on ahead, but with his rapid pace Ogloph soon overtook her. Together they plunged into the water.

The big male seals do not leave the islands for good after the mating season. They come back six or seven weeks later, toward mid-September. At this time they stay all together on the beach, near the water line, without showing any interest in the rookery.

After their departure the young are impatient to take over. The reserve bulls lord it over the rest, or at least try to, although the authority they have acquired by default can never equal that which their predecessors won by force. The young bulls claim a share in the general redistribution of females and try themselves out in combat for the first time. Even the bachelors invade the hitherto forbidden rookery and affect a commanding air. Although they are as yet incapable of exercising their masculine

prerogatives they put on a comical imitation of adulthood. They pace about an abandoned harem, grunting with a severe expression, attempting to attract the cows' attention. But the cows barely look at them, and figuratively shrug their shoulders. Soon the bachelors tire of this make-believe and go back to the playgrounds, where they amuse themselves with their younger companions and teach the newly arrived yearlings how to push one another off a rock.

During the first half of August the two-year-old virgin females appear upon the scene. Their arrival makes for a revival of interest, but not of combat, for they come in such great numbers that every reserve and young bull can have his pick. They lose their virginity at once, and give birth the following summer, along with the other females. The period of their first gestation is nine months, therefore, instead of a year. It is supposed that the fetus develops more quickly when the mother is not giving suck to a newborn pup.

The beginning of August is also the time when, for no visible reason, the pup makes up his mind to learn to swim. His first sallies are cautious and awkward, for a head that is large in proportion to the body is not an asset in swimming. At first the pups flail the water with their fore flippers and do not know how to use the hind ones. They tire very quickly and drag themselves up on the beach to rest. Little by little, however, they catch on, and enjoy themselves thoroughly. In the company of the bachelors and young females they pass a great deal of time playing offshore. This is what has led to the mistaken belief that their older companions are their instructors. Actually, the advanced swimmers are only indulging in good-natured play, ducking the novices and trying to make them choke on the water. But the novices do not lag behind long. By the middle of September they are completely at home in the sea.

OGLOPH and Matka were swimming side by side, about a dozen yards apart. They swam porpoise style, in and out of the water. Matka kept up without any difficulty, for female seals are excellent swimmers, able even to outstrip the males in a short sprint. Their first objective was the nearest fishing ground, less than a hundred miles southwest of Goddess Island. Ogloph and Matka were not alone. They were members of a large heterogeneous herd made up of full-grown bulls, cows and bachelors from various islands. They progressed at unequal distances one from another, but at the same eight-knot speed, so that there was a definite feeling of formation. The weather was fine, the sun was discernible just beyond the mist. Ogloph's first dive must have cleared the sand out of his left eye, for it no longer annoyed him. The shiny black backs of the seals plunged in and out of the gentle ocean swells.

They had gone about 40 miles when a small group of seals in the formation veered suddenly to the left and several of them seemed to abandon the porpoise stroke and make successive jumps clean out of the water. Soon another group just ahead veered to the right in the same odd manner. Ogloph felt Matka drawing closer to him and swimming more quickly. The whole herd picked up speed. In less than a minute they had attained their maximum rate of 14 knots.

Nothing was to be seen on the surface except the backs of plunging seals; but from time to time another group cut away from the herd with a jumping motion. Matka came still closer to Ogloph; now she was only two yards away. Suddenly Ogloph himself became aware of imminent danger. At almost the same second he saw the black backs of the killer whales — three long, inflated torpedoes shooting across his path from left to right. He swung instantly to the left, and Matka followed. Then, again



from the left, came another torpedo, larger than the rest and very, very near. Ogloph had no time to think, and as he emerged from the water the killer's side grazed his. To his right there was a white flash and a brief turmoil. Then all was quiet. Matka was gone, and in the place where she had been swimming there was nothing but the surface of the sea.

Ogloph rejoined the herd, plunging straight for the southwest. There was nothing he could do except keep up the pace. Against the killer whale there was no possible defense. The speed of the killer was greater than that of any seal but the greatest danger was to the laggards.

For about two hours the herd proceeded at top speed. Every now and then a group of seals veered to one side and jumped out of the water. By now it was clear enough what that meant. Little by little, however, the killers' attacks became less frequent, finally falling off entirely, and the herd returned to its normal speed of eight knots. Soon the front line slowed up still more and came to a stop, so that those following almost bumped into it. The formation broke up, and every seal was on his own. The fishing ground was at hand.

Ogloph's appetite was tremendous. He ate a large quantity of cuttlefish and also some very delicate small salmon. For several days he was content to eat and sleep in the water, and nothing happened to mar his pleasure. Every day was marked by arrivals and departures. The females who had left a young pup on the islands wolfed as much fish as they could, and soon hastened back to resume their nursing duties. The bachelors stayed no more than one or two days either. But the old bulls had to get back the 300 pounds or so of weight they had lost at the rookeries, and their stay at the fishing ground was prolonged.

After he had been there a week Ogloph felt an urge to move on. It was not yet time to go back and wind up the season at Goddess Island, but he wanted a change and an opportunity to do some long-distance swimming. To cover wide areas on the sur-

face of the globe is part of a seal's nature; and it was this part of Ogloph that now demanded satisfaction. The next fishing ground was at the Kurile Islands, some 200 miles away, and this seemed like a good immediate goal. When 100 or so bulls were ready to start, one of them gave an imperceptible signal and they were off, heading southwest again.

Their herd swam fast and in open formation, for after gorging on fish the bulls were very strong. Ogloph felt the water slide over the smooth keel of his body as if he were an integral part of the sea. When night fell sky and sea were one vast mass of shadows, but Ogloph did not need to see. He melted into the darkness without being in any way lost, his movement in harmony with that of the sea, and indeed of the planet. At the first light of dawn the herd of seals reappeared, exactly as it had been the night before.

SEVERAL weeks later Ogloph was again heading north, back to Goddess Island. He had gorged himself at every fishing ground of the North Pacific and regained most of the weight and strength he had lost during the summer, and yet he was prey to a certain lassitude. He did not know how long ago he had left Goddess Island, or how many times he had left and come back to it before, since every time was just like the last. All he knew was that he was swimming north and that he would find his island just as he had always found it when he came every September to wind up the season. Yes, the island would be the same, but perhaps he, Ogloph, was changing. His long whiskers were completely white. Perhaps he had simply grown old.

At Goddess Island Ogloph soon installed himself in his favorite inlet. A cold wind was blowing the sand on the beach and wafting wisps of fog onto the cliffs and rocks overhead. The plateau was stripped of grass and covered with stretches of mud, where the pups were still playing. It was clear at a glance that society along the shore had lost its hierarchic order; indeed, had lost organization of any kind. The rookery was entirely broken

up. Old reserve bulls, young bulls, cows and pups, all wandered aimlessly on the beaches, like a ship's passengers who have arrived too early at a port of embarkation and do not know what to do with their time. Full-grown bulls, like Ogloph, just back from a summer cruise, looked at this untidy scene with disapproval. The only ones who seemed to have any definite purpose were the pups. No one could fathom the secret of their strategy; but, to judge from the way several young Napoleons were marching them up and down, they must be in training for some maneuver. Ogloph looked at them out of his one eye, like an indulgent grandfather. A grandfather he was, most assuredly; indeed, a great-grandfather and perhaps even more.

The end of October brought terrible storms. For an entire week there was a 50-mile-an-hour gale. Giant waves lashed the rocks with a sound like cannon balls; the bays were covered with foam, and the beaches were swept by the almost horizontal rain and spray. The seals, jet-black and streaming with water, looked like fishermen in oilskins. At the first respite a large number of cows and young seals set out for the south, and from then on thousands of them left every day. The great annual exodus had begun. It would last for two months, and the oldest bulls would be the last to depart. On the gradually abandoned beaches there were thousands of carcasses, left from the various clashes and accidents of the summer season.

Now it was almost the end of December. Seen from above, Goddess Island was like an irregular lump of sugar with blackened edges set on a black sea. The land was still there, under a coating of snow, and sometimes the wind was strong enough to uncover the rocks. It was hard to see why the wind did not destroy every seed of life, every hope of a reflowering in the spring, why it did not tear away the thin coating of earth over the volcanic foundation. But seeds of life, and even living creatures, were still there in spite of wind, cold, and the interminable winter nights. Nonmigrating birds, such as the white owl, curled up in

their holes. Grass and flower seeds were there in the hard ground. But the only actively moving animals in this desolate landscape were a few seals, the oldest bulls, who had not yet made up their minds to leave and stood on the shore contemplating the scene of desolation.

Ogloph knew that it was time to go. Only about 50 of his fellows were left on the island. Those who had already gone must by now have attained some less inclement clime, fertile fishing grounds, or in the case of the cows and the young, the waters of California. What kept Ogloph, an idle and somewhat pathetic figure, on the desolate shore, was probably a lessening of his vitality, an inertia that inevitably crept up on white-whiskered seals like himself. But to a chance observer of the row of old seals, unmoving in their pensive contemplation of the water line, it would have seemed that their delay was due to a nostalgic reluctance to quit a place they had known so long. Here they had played as pups, here they had fought and loved and suffered, here they had always longed to return. Perhaps each one was asking himself: "This place for which I have so often longed, this place that is such a part of myself — shall I ever see it again? Or am I leaving it this time forever?"

Ogloph put out to sea, swimming slowly to join a group of seals who were marshaling offshore at one end of the island. A hundred yards out he turned around and let the waves float him back. Now the beach was entirely deserted. From this distance the dead bodies were indistinguishable from the pebbles, for there was a powder of snow over them all.

Ogloph saw the other seals start to pull away. He hung on for a few minutes, swimming in order not to be thrown ashore, and then steered for the open sea. The others were just ahead on his right, but he was in no hurry to catch up. For the last few weeks company of any kind had been distasteful, and he was content to know that they were there, about two miles away.

The group of seals was heading due south. And if Ogloph had

been in the vanguard, that is just the way he would have led them. The first thing was to seek a lower latitude and escape the fury of the northern weather; there would be time after that to make a diagonal turn eastward to the fishing grounds off Japan. The sea was very rough, so that Ogloph had to climb to the top of mountainous waves and plunge into the dark hollows between. At the bottom of every hollow he was momentarily protected from the frigid air; but when he came up again, half-suffocated, to the crest in order to breathe, it was as if a sheet of solid ice slapped him in the face. The wind was increasingly violent, raising clouds of icy spray from the surface of the sea, so that there was no clear distinction between air and water. And this was what Ogloph had to take into his lungs to keep going. The familiar smell of the other seals no longer reached his nostrils. He was moving at no more than five knots and by the end of the day he had covered only 30 miles, with the probability of there being at least 100 more miles of storm before him.

It was the dead of night, and Ogloph was swimming stubbornly southward amid the fury of the elements. His separation from the other seals was no cause for worry, for he had often covered great expanses of sea alone. What was new was to be conscious of his own existence as distinct from that of the sea and to know that it was no easy job to plow ahead. In the past he had always felt himself one with the sea; but now, he felt strangely apart. The sea was a hostile element raised up in his way.

Ogloph swam that night and all the next day. When the second twilight caused the storm to merge into the darkness he must have covered about 140 miles. There was no sign of the other seals, and Ogloph did not even think about them. He detected the arrival of dawn only when he saw the waves profiled against a background slightly less somber than before. The waves were even higher than they had been the preceding day. They hid the heavens from his one eye; when he was on the crest he had only the brief vision of a circle of sea, which was obliterated a second

later as he plunged into the hollow. Ogloph was very tired and wanted to sleep. He had often slept in a stormy sea, but never in such a state of exhaustion in a sea so wild. His instinct for self-preservation told him that, however badly he needed it, sleep was something he could not afford.

If Ogloph could have risen above the waves and seen himself he might have been really afraid. His big seal body was only a speck on the great expanse of water, and only a very close observer could have known that it was alive and moving. The seal slid down from the crest of a towering wave and disappeared under a trail of white foam. At the bottom he paused, and then in two or three thrusts, he struggled up to the next crest and slid down from it in turn. His pauses at the bottom seemed to be growing longer; he lingered there in suspense and inertia. Each time it seemed as if he could not make the climb again.

When the fur seals of the North Pacific die of old age, they always die at sea; it is part of their nature. Ogloph was behaving in accord with a hereditary pattern. His attitude was one of infinite resignation. Conquered by the storm, he stoically accepted his fate.

For years Ogloph had found happiness in the harmony between his movement and that of the element in which it had its being. Now the only way he could achieve this harmony was to cease struggling and give in to the waves. Then these great mountains would lose their terror; he would no longer exhaust himself combating them, but once more find himself at one with the sea. With infinite relief Ogloph stopped swimming and closed his eye. The impetus of one wave carried him without his stirring to the crest of the next, then he slid backward and rolled over.

The big seal's body floated north-northwest, driven by the storm. It lay balanced in the hollow between two waves, disappeared for a few seconds in the dark water, then reappeared, suspended in the same way, in the next hollow, where the whistling rage of the crests could no longer reach it. Finally, as if it

had decided of its own will to fulfill its destiny, it grew gradually heavier. Now it was only a dark spot, less and less visible from the surface, until at last it sank into the bosom of the sea.

EVERY year at the same season a big fur seal of the North Pacific, identical to Ogloph and just as ordered in his movements, swims toward the north, toward Goddess Island. Every April for perhaps the last 50,000 years, for Ogloph is immortal. Early in May he comes ashore on the island and the whole cycle begins again. Every winter the old seals are the last to leave the icy beach and the weakest among them perish, like Ogloph, in a wintry storm. Then the following spring another Ogloph swims toward the north. And so on, into infinity.



Georges Blond



GEORGES BLOND was born in Marseille, France, in 1906. He attended the École de Navigation in Le Havre, from which he was graduated as an ensign in 1926. Instead of pursuing a naval career, however, he turned to journalism and for eight years was on the staff of the famous weekly, *Candide*. During this period he produced three novels.

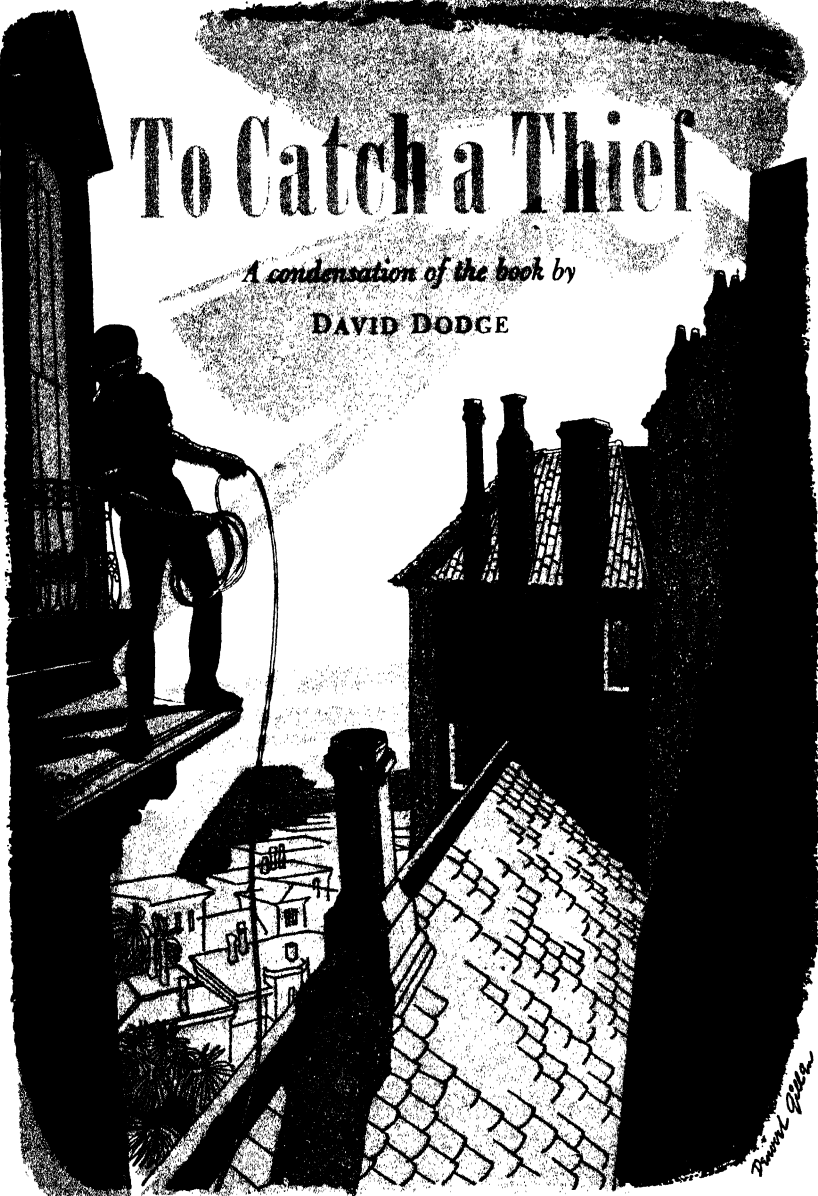
After the war, in which he served as a naval lieutenant, Blond continued writing. One of his most successful books was *Le Survivant du Pacifique*, the story of the U. S. aircraft carrier *Enterprise*. *The Plunderers* was first published in France in 1950 under the title *L'Île de la Déesse*. In the original it was a selection of *Le Cercle du Livre de France*, the French Book Club in America.

Illustrations by Denver L. Gillen


To Catch a Thief

A condensation of the book by

DAVID DODGE



*"To Catch a Thief," copyright 1951 by David Dodge, is published at \$2.50 by
Random House, Inc., 457 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.*

 *To Catch a Thief*, the proverb goes, you must set a thief. On the glamorous, opulent Riviera an acrobatic jewel thief is loose — and John Robie, whose own past can't stand investigation, must find the culprit to save his own skin. Through luxury hotels, Mediterranean villas and Monte Carlo's famed gambling casino the dogged chase goes on.

Against a Côte d'Azur backdrop as vivid as a travelogue, *To Catch a Thief* unfolds a story which is pure entertainment, peopled with a host of colorful characters: Maude Stevens, the Texas oil millionairess, whose diamonds are an invitation to larceny; smiling Bellini, whose pipelines to the French underworld are so useful; Danielle, a Bikini-ed blonde with unusual ambition; and Mr. Paige, the shrewd, dry British insurance agent who gives a surprise twist to the denouement.

David Dodge's unusual tale provides the excitement of a first-class mystery coupled with a colorful trip through one of the world's most romantic settings.

CHAPTER 1

THE *agents de police* came for John Robie sooner than he expected them.

It was a hot, still summer evening in August. Crickets sawed at their fiddles in the grass and a bullfrog who lived in a pool at the bottom of the garden boomed an occasional bass note. John was burning letters in the fireplace when first the crickets, then the bullfrog, stopped their music. His setter, sleeping on the rug, woke suddenly and cocked her ears, but he did not need the dog's help. The crickets were better watchmen.

He had already changed his clothes and buttoned his passport and billfold into the inside pocket of his jacket. He was ready to leave the house. He kicked the ashes in the fireplace, crumbling them, before he went into the kitchen. The setter growled, deep in her throat.

Germaine, his cook, was making a ragout, peering nearsightedly into the big iron pot on the stove and muttering to herself.

He said, "Germaine."

"M'sieu?" She still peered into the pot.

"I'm going away. Dinner won't be necessary."

She looked up at that, surprised and indignant. He had no time to tell her more. He said, "*Au revoir*," and ran up the back stairs. The dog growled again, more loudly.

He had one path of escape open to him. It was not the easiest, but it would do. It will leave no doubt in their minds, if there is any doubt, he thought. The dog was barking steadily by the time the doorbell rang, and he heard Germaine's loose slippers slap across the hall. He stepped out on the little *terrasse* where he slept on hot nights, climbed the low railing, balanced himself for a moment, and jumped.

In mid-air John saw the upturned face of the man in the garden below. The *agent* was too startled to shout, at first.

It was a fine jump. John had it all timed and precalculated. The branch was there when he reached for it, flat-out on his face and stretching. As his feet went down he bent at the hips, kicked hard on the upswing, let go while he was still rising, arched his back and went over the top of the high garden wall with inches to spare. He came down on his toes in the middle of the lane beyond the wall, and was running toward the shelter of the orchard at the top of the hill before the *agent* let out his first shout.

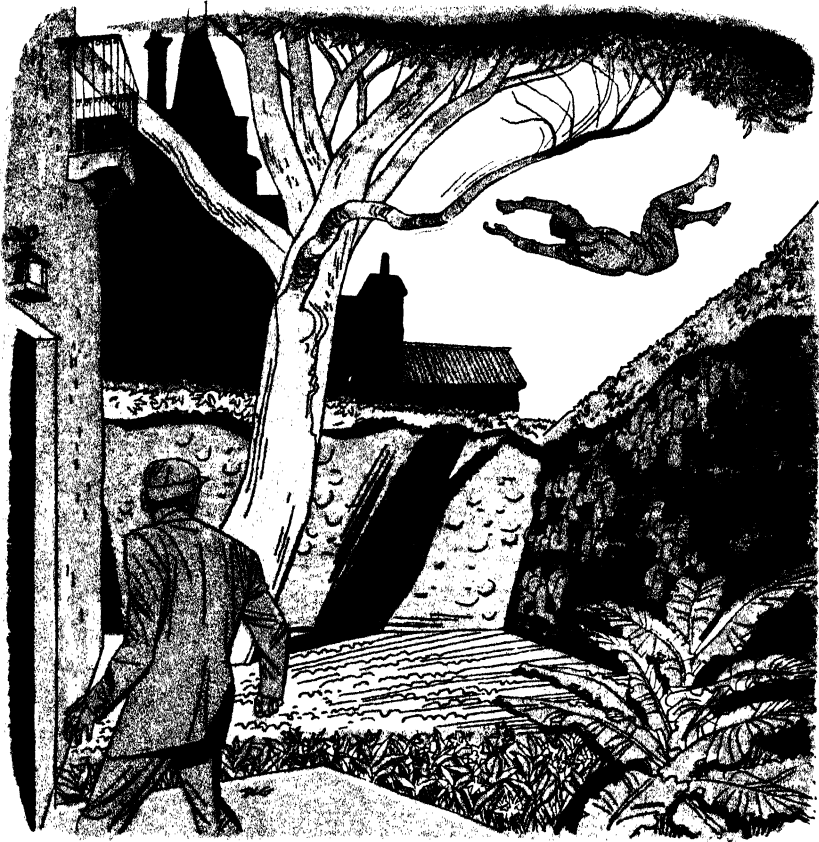
From the orchard on the top of the hill he turned his back on the Villa des Bijoux. It was hard to think he would never see the villa again. There were many things in it he hated to leave behind, many ties to a good life; it was all finished and done with.

He knew the country well, and he knew all of the South of France well, even to the odors. Most of the farmers who were his neighbors cultivated patches of flowers to sell to the perfume factories at Vence or Grasse.

It was a ten-kilometer walk to Cros de Cagnes and the Route Nationale, where he could catch a bus. At the bus station he bought a copy of *Nice-Matin* to hide his face. There was nothing about him in the newspaper. It would be still another 24 hours before the French papers picked up the Paris *Herald Tribune's* lead and spread it across the front page with headlines and photographs. He thought he would be safely out of the public eye before that happened; or on his way to a French prison. One or the other.

There was only a single passenger on the bus when he boarded it. He would not have given her a second thought except that caution made him observant, and she was clearly out of place on a rattletrap Route Nationale bus. She was dressed for the evening; a long gown, fragile, spike-heeled slippers, a fur wrap. He knew enough about furs to guess that the price of her wrap alone would buy an expensive car and pay the salary of a man to drive her wherever she wanted to go. She was one of a type he knew well, had made it his business to know.

Force of habit made him look at her fingers and ear lobes. After-



ward he watched her until a movement of her shoulders opened the wrap far enough to let him see her throat. She wore neither rings, necklace, earrings nor, as far as he could see, any jewelry, not even a wrist watch. It was not in keeping with the wrap, any more than the wrap was in keeping with her presence on the bus.

He wondered if the explanation could be that she had lost her jewelry to a thief. It was incongruous that he might be fleeing from the police on the same bus with one of the women whose losses had set the police on his trail.

The bus filled gradually. When it reached the end of its run

opposite the big pink stucco casino in Cannes, he lost sight of the girl and did not think of her again.

He joined the strollers along the promenade of La Croisette, the boulevard skirting the beach, keeping to the beach side, where the lights were dim. He crossed the boulevard only when he was opposite the shabby front of the Hotel Napoleon.

The Napoleon was a poor distant cousin to the newer, more fashionable hotels which faced La Croisette farther up the beach near the casino and the yacht harbor. The faded red carpet had a new patch since his last visit. Bellini's sign near the elevator still advertised the same services in the same three languages. The English part of the sign read:

HENRI BELLINI

Insurance — Sales and Rentals — Tourist Agents

Imports and Exports — Domestic Help

Interpreter — Stenographer

Investments

An arrow pointed up the stairway to the mezzanine floor.

BELLINI was reading the Paris edition of the New York *Herald Tribune* in the cluttered cubbyhole that served him as an office. He did not move when he heard the doorknob turn. The door had a spring lock and could be opened from the outside only with a key, but he always left the key in the outside lock, except when he had confidential business to transact in the room.

John brought the key with him when he entered. He put it on the corner of Bellini's desk.

Bellini took off his spectacles and peered at him, smiling his ingratiating smile of welcome.

"I was wondering when I would hear from you," he said, chuckling. "Have you seen this very interesting article in the newspaper?" He tapped his stubby finger on the paper.

John said, "I've read it."

Bellini chuckled again.

He had not changed in the months since John had seen him. He always looked the same; small, round, oily and happy. A German soldier had broken his shoulder with a rifle butt during the Occupation. The bones had not been set properly, so the shoulder stayed hunched up around his ear in a permanent half-shrug, and one arm was shorter than the other. He wore heavy horn-rimmed glasses that made him look like an owl.

He never stopped smiling, and no one could say anything remotely humorous in his presence without earning an appreciative titter. His manners were excellent, and he had never been known to break his word. In addition to his legitimate business activities, he was an importer of smuggled goods, a black-market operator and a dealer in stolen property. He was careful to carry on through intermediaries, and since he commanded the absolute loyalty of everyone who worked for him, he had never been arrested nor had his reputation as an honest businessman been challenged publicly. He was John Robie's best friend.

John said, "I'm leaving the country. Can you fix this for me?"

He took the passport from his pocket. Bellini looked briefly at the passport, then up at him again, still beaming.

"What do you want done to it?"

"Change the number and name, set my birthday back ten years, and alter the date on the entry stamp so it won't be more than three months old when I leave. I'll dye my hair, pad myself around the middle, and have a new photograph taken. The only pictures they have of me are newspaper prints, and those date back to before the war. They won't have any reason to look twice at a middle-aged tourist. Once I'm out of the country, I'm safe."

"You are not afraid of extradition?"

"I'm not that important. When they learn that I've left the country, and the thief keeps operating, they'll see their mistake."

"Will the thief keep operating after you leave, John?"

"There'll be no reason for him to stop."

Bellini chuckled, blinking wisely behind the spectacles.

John said, "Did you think that Le Chat had come back?"

Bellini lifted his good shoulder to the level of his crippled shoulder, then let it drop again.

"It's been a long time since I saw you last. A man might change his mind."

"It isn't Le Chat."

Bellini nodded, satisfied. "I was waiting to hear you say it yourself. Now, what can you do about this story in the newspaper?"

"What I told you. Run. It doesn't leave me any other choice."

ROBIE knew how soon the other papers would take up the cry. He had caught their attention before, although not as John Robie. French reporters, who coin a nickname for every public figure, named him Le Chat after his first thefts in 1936, at Nice and Menton. In the months that followed and until his imprisonment in 1939, only the gathering war clouds over Europe received more space in the French press than he did.

He was a thief who made good newspaper copy. He was never known to employ violence or carry a weapon more dangerous than a glass cutter, never stole anything but cash and jewelry, always operated alone and was never identified, except by his nickname, until a receiver of stolen property in Paris turned him in to the Sûreté Nationale after an argument over the price to be paid for a necklace of pigeon-blood rubies. The insurance companies' losses from the activities of Le Chat in the South of France for three years amounted to the equivalent of three quarters of a million dollars, in various currencies. The several receivers who bought stolen stones from him never paid more than 40 percent of insurable value, sometimes less, but he had nearly eight million francs, then worth \$250,000, in several banks under several names when he was arrested.

The police never learned about the money and he wasted none

of it on expensive lawyers. He had no defense worth presenting. The Sûreté agents who broke into his Paris hotel room had taken him while he was unsetting the stones from the necklace which belonged to the wife of a member of the Chamber of Deputies. Because the theft had taken place on the Côte d'Azur, they brought him back to Nice and tried him there before the Cour d'Assises.

The newspapers gave the trial front-page coverage. He was good copy to the end. He admitted nothing and offered no information about himself. He had no identity papers. The reporters knew that he was a young man, suspected from his accent that he was an American and were reasonably certain, as much from the muscular development of his body as from his technique as a thief, that he was a trained gymnast, possibly a professional acrobat. The evidence that was not admitted in court got into the newspapers easily, along with some imaginings not far from the truth; the story sworn to by the servant girl who had seen it and raised the alarm, of his jump from the roof of a villa in Eze to the ground 40 feet below, and his bounding leap from there over an eight-foot wall; another story, solemnly reported in the French way, of a woman who had lost diamonds worth \$20,000 and wakened in time to see Le Chat, in dead-black clothing, spread his arms and fly out the window with the stones, like a bat.

They sent him to serve his sentence at La Maison Centrale de Fontevault-l'Abbaye, near Saumur. He arrived there a few months before the outbreak of World War II. He had been in prison less than a year when the German army arrived to take over the management of that part of the country.

La Maison Centrale was full of cutthroats; a few thieves, like himself, but more murderers, gangsters and apaches, one step removed from the criminals who were sent to Devil's Island. The Germans considered them good material to pass over into the care of what remained of the Third Republic. One night the entire population of La Maison Centrale was herded into trucks, driven into the Unoccupied Zone and turned loose.

It was one of several German errors. All the murderers, Frenchmen first and cutthroats only incidentally, went into the maquis and began practicing their trade on German soldiers. John, with no place else to go, joined the others.

He met Bellini in the maquis. Bellini, in spite of his Italian name, was French, a *Niçois*. When he learned the identity of Le Chat from John's jailmates, he asked, "Do you have plans to return to the Côte after this business is finished? Because if you do, I must warn you. You were a great inconvenience to me. I would have enjoyed betraying you to the Sûreté. Or having you strangled. Every time you made a theft, my organization felt the heavy hand of the law."

"I plan to return, but not as a thief."

"You have reformed, then? A wonderful thing to hear. I have always contended that the French prison system had its points."

John shook his head and smiled. Bellini amused him.

"Retired is a better word," he said. "I have all the money I need. Now that they know my face, I'm no longer safe. I've seen all of the French prison system that I want to see."

"Good. Good. I am glad to hear it. I should not like to be your business rival."

They both laughed. John said, "We would make better partners, I think."

They made good partners in the maquis. Bellini was not a jailbird like the others, only a businessman with useful connections in *le milieu*, the French underworld. The Germans wanted him to use his connections on their side. When he refused, they broke his shoulder instead of shooting him, another error.

He organized his own band of *maquisards*, all Boche killers. John, the only one among them without a Frenchman's inborn hatred for German invaders, caught it in time from the others. Because of the strength in his arms and shoulders, John was most often called on to strangle sentries or to climb quickly and quietly when climbing was necessary.

After the fighting had ended, John, who had been wounded twice, neither time seriously, left France for the United States. He had no difficulty getting out of the country. To enter the United States without papers, he had to show that he was an American citizen, which he did by proving that he had been born in New York State. His birth certificate was enough. After establishing his nationality, he applied for a passport and returned to France on the first boat.

It was not recklessness. Bellini wrote that the Sûreté had made no attempt to round up the convicts of La Maison Centrale. The prison records had been destroyed by the Germans, and it was common knowledge in *le milieu* that no man who had killed Germans during the Occupation need worry about an unfinished prison term as long as he remained respectable. John intended to remain respectable. To do so, he needed the money that still stood to his credit in the French banks.

The franc had deteriorated badly and was still tumbling. He found that he was worth less than \$50,000 instead of a quarter of a million, and that rigid currency controls made it impossible for him to take the money out of the country. Still, eight million francs was a comfortable fortune in France, and he liked France. He stayed.

He had used his own name on the passport. No one questioned him. He bought the villa and called it the Villa of the Jewels because a name was needed on the mailbox and the joke was a harmless one. He registered at the prefecture in Nice, where he had been convicted, and applied for a *permis de séjour* as a resident. The card came through, and still nobody asked if John Robie of the Villa des Bijoux was the thief of the same name who had been sentenced to 20 years at La Maison Centrale for jewel robbery. Finally, after he had been at the villa for several months, the Vence *commissaire de police* came to call on him, riding a bicycle and puffing because of the steepness of the hill.

The *commissaire* was a short broad man with sharp eyes and a

soft voice. His name was Oriol. John gave him a glass of wine. He took one sip to be polite, and did not touch it again. His eyes wandered around the room. "You are very comfortable here, at the Villa des Bijoux, Monsieur Robie."

From the way he said it, John realized that he knew. He went on slowly, "I hope you continue to be comfortable here, monsieur. I know of your record — with the maquis, I mean. I was in the maquis myself, for a time. Before that, I was a police clerk. At the Cour d'Assises in Nice."

John waited. Oriol thought for a while, working out his sentences, before he said, "I recommended that the *permis de séjour* be given to you, Monsieur Robie. My recommendation was enough. There will be no further investigation of your background at present."

"I'm very grateful. What do you mean by 'at present'?"

Oriol turned over his hands, palms up. "I mean that there is nothing I know of now which would require investigation. What you may do tomorrow or the next day is, of course, another thing. If you were to attract official attention to yourself in any way, then I, as *commissaire*, would ask more questions than I have asked."

He stood up. They shook hands, and the *commissaire* pedaled away down the hill. John felt really secure for the first time since his return.

He continued on friendly terms with Oriol and through him met others of his neighbors, peasants and villagers and minor government functionaries. He began playing *boule* with them in the village on Sundays. When the Grasse *boule* team challenged them to a match, he went up to Grasse to help defend the village honor, and was paired off against a big broad-shouldered man who introduced himself simply as Paul. He was the most popular man on the Grasse team, and their best player; likable, quiet, friendly. John thought he might be the village blacksmith. He was surprised to hear that Paul was le Comte du Pré de la Tour.

They were friends from the beginning. Paul, several years

younger than John, went by the name of du Pré, rarely using his title. John learned from Oriol that his home was in Lyons, but he owned a little *domaine* in the hills above Grasse which he pretended to farm for profit, although he was independently wealthy. Actually the *domaine* was a summer rest home for his wife, Lisa, who was dying of tuberculosis. They were hopelessly in love, they both knew she was dying, and they never spoke of it to each other. Paul spent as much of his time by her bedside as she would permit. After she had met John, and became aware of his friendship for her husband, she begged him to take Paul with him whenever he went on a hunting or fishing trip, which he did frequently.

"Get him away from me, John," she would say, with tears in her eyes. "Keep him occupied. Don't let him think about me. I'm afraid of what will happen to him when I die."

"You're not going to die, Lisa. Don't talk that way."

"I'm not afraid for myself, John. I'm afraid for Paul. Help him to find something, somebody, to take my place, John. Be his friend for me."

For her sake, and because he genuinely liked Paul, he cultivated Paul's company. They hunted together, went on fishing trips, and, during a trying period when Lisa was confined in a Swiss sanitarium and Paul was unable to visit her, attempted the stony peak of the Jungfrau. Paul and the guide who took them were experienced mountain climbers, but John, who had never been on a rock face before, surprised them both. His strength, climbing skill, and immunity to the vertigo that bothers beginners made Paul question him later. He evaded an explanation. Paul, seeing his reluctance to talk about himself, did not ask again.

It was three years before Lisa died. Paul was quieter now than before, and smiled less often. When the Russians first moved in Asia, Paul had gone to Lyons to volunteer for the French contribution to the United Nations troops, and was rejected because of the plate in his knee, a souvenir of his service with the Free French. He wrote John a curt, unhappy note. But John had no

time to worry about Paul. Oriol paid him a second official visit on the same day that Paul's letter arrived.

He had been on a solitary fishing trip. It was a good day. He was covered with fish scales and sunburn, and had brought back enough of a catch for Germaine to make a bouillabaisse. He had not seen the newspapers.

Oriol said, "Did you ever, during your time with the maquis, hear of a man named Le Chat, John?"

John felt the sweat start along his ribs and on his back.

He said, "I know the name."

Oriol took a folded newspaper out of his pocket and held it out, his sharp eyes watching John's face.

"He was a famous jewel thief. We think he may be operating here on the Côte."

John looked at the paper.

A Mme. Lisieux, staying at one of the resort hotels in Menton, had lost jewels valued at three million francs to a thief who got in through the window of her top-floor suite during the night by swinging himself down from the cornice of the roof. Most of the article was about the thief's boldness and physical agility. Clearly the man who wrote it had never heard of Le Chat, because the comparison was a natural one to make. Le Chat's name was not mentioned.

He returned the paper to Oriol. Oriol looked at him woodenly as he folded it.

John said, "I remember reading about Le Chat years ago. This man's technique seems much the same. But it isn't the same thief. Le Chat was killed during the Resistance. I was there when he died."

Oriol said nothing. John wanted to take him by the arm and say, "I swear it. I like being an honest man. I wouldn't steal again if I starved. All I want is to live my life, drink my wine, dig in my garden and be let alone." But he could not say anything so bald. The amnesty that let him live peacefully at the Villa des Bijoux

was not an official one. Legally, he was still an escaped convict, and Oriol a *commissaire de police*.

Oriol went away on his bicycle, still looking solemn. As a maquis fighter himself, and a fellow *boule* player, he wanted to give John the benefit of every doubt. But he was not overtrusting, and because he alone knew John's identity and had taken upon himself the responsibility of extending the universally recognized but legally nonexistent amnesty, he watched the Villa des Bijoux for several nights. There were no further thefts. Oriol abandoned the night watch.

John read the newspapers every day. The Korean war pushed local crimes off the front page for several weeks, until the climbing thief moved back into the news.

Three villas were robbed in five days. They were all in the same neighborhood, in or near St. Jean on Cap Ferrat, and the total value stolen amounted to 22 million francs, about \$60,000.

All three thefts bore the trade-marks of the same daring, agile thief. An arrest, any arrest, was demanded by the newspapers. Still no one thought to bring up the name of Le Chat. There was nothing John could do but follow the newspaper reports and hope for the thief's arrest.

Two weeks later there were new headlines. A hotel room in Monte Carlo was entered and robbed. The theft was spectacular. The thief left footprints on the marquee over the main hotel entrance, and marks on the front of the building to show where he had climbed one of the chains supporting the marquee. The window he wanted to enter had been closed and locked, but he had cut the pane away with a glass cutter. He had left behind only a crescent of glass cut from the windowpane, with a small piece of adhesive tape attached, and no fingerprints.

John knew that it would be only a matter of time after that. The thief had duplicated, almost action for action, one of Le Chat's boldest thefts, even to the use of tape to keep the cut glass from falling. It was as if he were inviting a comparison.

The Paris edition of the New York *Herald Tribune* finally made the connection between new thief and old. If it had been *Nice-Matin* or one of the other local papers, he would not have escaped when he did.

The *Herald Tribune* reached Riviera newsstands about noon or later, and he had an arrangement with the mailman to deliver a copy with the afternoon mail. The newspaper headline was: HAS LE CHAT RETURNED? Underneath there was a blurry picture of himself, taken in the courtroom of the Cour d'Assises in 1939. The article which went with the picture put a series of questions, only suggesting some of the answers. Was it true, as rumored, that Le Chat and other notorious criminals had been released from prison by the Germans, but that because of their good record with the Liberation forces during the war, the Sûreté had extended an amnesty against their further imprisonment? Was this what accounted for the failure of the police to make a single arrest in connection with the latest thefts? Had Le Chat truly returned, and was he immune from arrest?

John knew that Oriol, who spoke no English, would not ordinarily look at an English-language newspaper, but it could not be long before he heard of the story. John's arrest and return to prison would follow automatically, whether or not the real thief continued his activity.

He changed his clothes, burned his letters, took the money he kept in the house for an emergency, and left the Villa des Bijoux by way of the *terrace* and the tree when the *agents de police* came for him. Now, with Bellini's help, he meant to leave France. He had no further plans.

BELLINI, peering at him wisely under the green shade of his reading lamp, his round, happy face shining with sweat, said, "If you leave, you can never come back. You realize that, don't you? Once the Sûreté brings the old charge out in the open . . ."

"It's out in the open now. That's why I'm leaving."

"Never to see *la belle France* again?"

Only a Frenchman could imply so much with a single question.

"There's no other way. How soon can you have the passport ready?"

Bellini lifted his good shoulder. "Two days, except for the photograph."

"I'll take care of the photograph. Somebody else will have to find me luggage and clothes. Where can I stay, without papers?"

"Where else but with your friends? Let me think."

Bellini thought, smiling at nothing.

"It would not be wise to remain here with me," he said at last. "There is Jean-Pierre? Le Borgne? Coco? No. They are all being watched. The police are making it difficult for everyone. I, myself, have had to suspend several of my more important activities."

"You and Le Borgne and Jean-Pierre and Coco and the others had better get together and do something about it."

"We have tried. Cautiously, of course, because at first we thought it might be you again, and one does not give an old comrade to the police, however inconsiderate he may be of his friends." Bellini chuckled. "We will have to try harder now. With this new thing" — he tapped the newspaper lying in front of him — "and the criticism of the police which will follow" — he gave his lop-sided, one-shoulder shrug — "we must uncover him before he ruins us. Before Jean-Pierre and Coco and Le Borgne are back in prison and I am left alone with no one to help me."

He beamed, his head cocked sideways. "We need your help, John."

Before John could speak, he lifted the hand of his crippled arm. "Let me finish. Whoever this thief is — and he will be hard to uncover, very hard — he has borrowed your style, your technique. He thinks as you did, robs as you used to, mocks the police with his actions as you mocked them. He is another Cat. You see what an opportunity it gives you? You could put yourself into his mind, plan his thefts, think a step ahead of him. . . ."

"I can't do it, Bellini. They're looking for me now. Not him. I have the whole sentence to serve if I go back. . . ."

"They would forget the prison sentence if you gave them this thief. He makes them ridiculous. . . ."

"They would forget about him if they could take me, too. They can *prove* that I'm Le Chat. If they find me . . ."

"What real risk will you run? You said yourself that they would not be looking for a middle-aged tourist. There are hundreds, thousands of middle-aged tourists here on the Côte for the season. You would not have to expose yourself. You remember once you said that we would have made good partners? That is it. All you have to do is think for us. . . ."

"And risk La Maison Centrale again if I slipped." John turned away. He walked to the window to look at the moon track lying across the calm sea. Two or three miles offshore the lights of a passing steamer winked across the water, heading south and west for Marseilles, Gibraltar, the Atlantic and America.

And safety, he thought.

"You need not slip, John," Bellini chuckled. "I am confident. I have already made preliminary plans for you. You will have to go to Marseilles for a few days, to Jean-Pierre, but all arrangements have been made for your return. I believe you will be able to work best here in Cannes, where we can keep in touch with each other. With your mind and my organization, it will be easy. Relatively easy, of course. Everything is relative."

John turned around.

"You were confident, weren't you?" he said, unsmiling.

Bellini giggled.

"I am always confident of my friends. I find that loyalty repays loyalty."

He talked on, chuckling as he outlined the risks John must run, as if he were rehearsing some practical joke they meant to play on a friend. It was his way. He would giggle on his deathbed. But he was careful to overlook no detail that might be important,

and John listened attentively. The knowledge that a slip would cost 20 years of his life kept his mind from wandering.

CHAPTER 2

A SÛRETÉ NATIONALE *agent* in plain clothes strolled along the sun-baked promenade of the Boulevard La Croisette. He was hot, his shirt stuck to his back, and he envied the seven-eighths-naked vacationers sporting on the strip of beach ten feet below the promenade, coloring the beach with brief bright bathing suits and tanned bare arms and legs. Cannes in midsummer was no place for a man who had to wear clothes.

Passing the impressive front of the Hotel Midi, he made his usual inspection of the small patch of roped-off sand which was the hotel's private beach. The *agent* saw nothing that interested him professionally. A girl came across the boulevard from the hotel and went down to the beach wearing a zebra-striped bathing suit that was startling even for Cannes. He hesitated, but the man who followed her gave him a cold look. The *agent* walked on.

John Robie, sitting in one of the shaded deck chairs on the *plage privée*, put down his newspaper after the *agent* had passed.

He was used to the *agents* who strolled La Croisette. They were as methodical about it as patrolling sentries, and as much alike in their sport clothes as soldiers in uniform, or as the young men who came down to the beach in the afternoon with the girl in the startling bathing suit.

He watched the girl pull on a white bathing cap over her dark hair. She was the girl he had seen on the bus, Francie Stevens. Bellini had identified her from John's description. Her mother was an American widow who was staying at the Hotel Midi for the season. Her jewels were insured by a London insurance company for \$72,500. Mrs. Stevens seemed a highly probable victim for the thief, and John occupied himself considering how the

jewelry could most easily be stolen. The girl interested him only because she was a factor to be considered in the theft.

She never wore jewelry herself, which puzzled him. It was no modesty on her part. The summer season on the Côte offered every woman an opportunity to make two displays; one of herself on the beach during the day, the other of her dress and ornament in the evening. Francie was noticeable on both occasions; on the beach because of her bathing suits, at other times because she wore no personal ornament of any kind, not even rings or a bracelet. This and her clear lack of interest in other things that brought most summer visitors to the Côte were puzzling. Otherwise she seemed like any other pretty girl. She had a good figure and the kind of Irish attractiveness that goes with blue eyes, a fair skin and dark hair. He thought she might be really eye-catching if she would make an effort to be.

He opened his paper to read the war news. The next *agent* would not come by for another hour. The strolling police, each of whom had a copy of a poor 12-year-old photograph and a physical description of Le Chat, acrobat, thief and jailbird, never gave a second look at the balding, thick-bodied man who sat reading a newspaper in a deck chair on the beach in front of the Hotel Midi.

John's eyebrows were darker and bushier, and he was moderately convex through the middle instead of concave. Pads in his shoes increased his height and made him toe out when he walked enough to give him a flat-footed, slightly clumsy appearance. He wore tinted glasses occasionally, but so did most of the other hotel guests while they were on the beach. The sun glare was strong.

"It is a matter of camouflage, not disguise," Jean-Pierre had told him in Marseilles. "As we did in the maquis, one adopts the coloration of one's surroundings. One blends. In your case, we blend you into a clot of tourists, like a cook blending fish in a bouillabaisse. You no longer exist as an individual. You merely contribute to the background."

Jean-Pierre's wife sewed the light harness John wore next to his skin to change his body contours. "The main thing," Jean-Pierre said, "is to disguise the body. The Boches did you a favor when they burned your prison photographs, but the body is known. That is what they will watch for, so no disclosures on the beach. You must wear the harness at all times in public, and you must take the sun — all Americans do that at Cannes — but never the water. You have in your baggage modest shorts, knee length in the British style, and loose shirts with sleeves to the elbow. Wear those during the day. Be unobtrusive, but do not slink. When you meet an *agent* on the street, do not look at his eyes or at his feet, but over his shoulder. It gives one an honest, unconcerned air."

The name that went with his new identity and passport was Jack Burns. Mr. Burns was in the insurance business, he came from New York City, he was 44 years old, and he had no distinguishing physical characteristics worth noting. His baggage bore the proper customs labels, and his wardrobe matched the wardrobes of several dozen other visitors of Mr. Burns' approximate age and financial status enjoying the pleasures of the summer on the Côte d'Azur. As Jean-Pierre had said, he contributed to the background.

He was not afraid of being recognized, unless by Oriol, and he hoped that Oriol was keeping quiet to protect his own position. A police *commissaire* who knew Le Chat's face not only as it had looked at the time of his trial but as it was 12 years afterward could be of great help to the Sûreté. He would first have to confess to the Sûreté that he had had Le Chat in his hands and let him go free, and he might not continue to hold his post as *commissaire* afterward. John had read *Nice-Matin* and *L'Espoir* carefully — in private; Mr. Burns did not read French — without finding any mention of the disappearance of John Robie from the Villa des Bijoux near Vence, or anything to connect his name with the thefts. He counted on Oriol's peasant caution to keep him from the confession.

John had no intention of making the acquaintance of Mrs. Stevens. But he wanted to be certain that the jewels she wore were those covered by the insurance policy and not copies.

Maude Stevens was in her early 50's; friendly, plump, and a heavy gambler at roulette. She had done her own washing and housework for the first 30 years of her life, helping her husband to scrape a living on a quarter section of worthless land in northern Texas. Her husband had died, her only child had been born, and the first of several oil wells had come in on the quarter section almost simultaneously. Since then, she had been repaying herself for the first 30 years. She liked her jewelry florid, preferring diamonds to other stones because of their sparkle, and she changed the pieces she wore from evening to evening, giving the world an opportunity to admire her entire collection, of which she was enormously proud.

John spent an evening standing behind her chair at a roulette wheel in the casino at Juan-les-Pins, leaning forward to make small bets on red or black whenever she placed her own counters so he could look unobtrusively at her rings. He won consistently on the red and black. Mrs. Stevens, who had been losing until then, began to cap his 100-franc counters with her own larger bets, first 10,000 francs and then, as the luck held with them, up to the table limit of 100,000. She won nearly 2,000,000 francs. They were great friends before the luck changed.

He saw enough of her jewelry that evening to satisfy himself that she wore the originals, and he meant to avoid her afterward. He found it almost impossible to do. On the evening of the day after their stroke of luck at roulette he went into the Midi's Petit Bar for the single cocktail which Mr. Burns allowed himself before dinner. She shouted at him from the table where she sat with Francie, and Francie's admirer of the moment.

"Lucky! Lucky Burns! Come over here! I want to buy you a drink."

He had to join them. Introducing him, she said, "This is the

man I was telling you about, Francie. Mr. Lucky Burns, my daughter, Francie, this is Leon, don't bother getting up, Leon, sit down, Lucky, we're all in the family. Look!"

She showed him a pin she was wearing. It was a small diamond dog with emerald eyes and a diamond leash ending in an emerald safety clasp. He did not have to look at it closely. Even at a snap guess, it represented an investment of five or six thousand dollars.

She said proudly, "I bought it this morning at Cartier's. It took all my winnings. The house will never get its money back now."

Mrs. Stevens, happy with her new jewel, kept moving the dog to new positions on her dress, until Leon said something about Le Chat. The *Herald Tribune* article was still a popular subject for discussion.

Mrs. Stevens scoffed at the suggestion that she had anything to worry about. "I keep my beads in the hotel safe," she said. "Besides, they're insured. And I've got my lucky dog to sick on any cat that comes around *me*."

She made a gesture of petting it and laughed. So did John and Leon. Francie smiled. She did not enter into the conversation. She was there at the table with them, nothing more.

John avoided the Petit Bar after that. He was very busy in the evenings, too busy to let himself be waylaid by Mrs. Stevens.

"Mrs. Stevens will do," he told Bellini, the day after she bought the diamond dog. "The others you had in mind won't attract a thief like Le Chat."

He felt sure that Mrs. Stevens, glittering nightly at the casinos, would catch the thief's eye in time, but he continued to look for other baits.

One trap was good, a dozen were better. John had decided on a second logical victim for the thief and was hunting a third when the necklace of pigeon-blood rubies which had been the cause of his arrest in 1939 was stolen a second time from the wife of the member of the Chamber of Deputies.

IT WAS a bad blow to John. "I could have had him," he told Belini. "He was bound to go after the rubies. They're irresistible. If I had known that necklace was in Nice" — he shook his head angrily — "I could have had him. It would all be over."

Another uproar followed the theft. Newspaper editorials attacking the Sûreté's incompetence continued for days. The thief had entered through a skylight which he reached by a dangerous climb up a drainpipe. He had cut a hole in the skylight with a glass cutter, lowered himself into the apartment on a rope and climbed the rope again to make his escape. Le Chat was offered to the readers of the newspapers at once as the public menace of the century and as a public benefactor exposing the stupidity and corruption of the Sûreté Nationale.

Lepic, the *commissaire divisionnaire* who had been sent down from Paris to take charge of the hunt for Le Chat was a young man for his position, and he had arrived there by working hard at his job. He had no use for incompetence or sloppy police work, and he did not believe in luck, or very strongly in anything else except his own ability.

He called a conference of his chief assistants the day after the rubies were stolen.

"Quoting *L'Espoir*, we are all as dumb as camels," he told them. He paused. "How many men do we have looking for Le Chat in Nice? Thirty? Forty? Fifty? All with copies of his picture, all with a physical description, all presumably alert to question anyone resembling him. And he laughs in our faces. If we have no brains, where are our eyes?"

He scowled at the only man who was not looking at the floor.

The man said, "It's been 12 years since the picture was taken. It was no good even then. Most of us never saw him in the flesh."

"I never saw him in the flesh myself. And I agree that the photo is a poor one. But I have his description here." Lepic slapped a piece of paper. "You all have it. This man's appearance has not changed so much in 12 years that he would be unrecognizable. I

say it because Le Chat climbs drainpipes like Le Chat, and to do that he must be in the same physical condition that he was 12 years ago, or nearly so. I do not ask you to rely on a poor photograph, because it is not necessary. We have a description of him. How many men do you see outside of a circus who answer this description physically?"

He rattled the paper at them.

The man who had spoken before said, "None, or we would question them. He wears clothes to cover the body, as he probably wears whiskers and tinted glasses to hide his face."

There was a mumble of assent from the other men.

Lepic bared his teeth. He said softly, "So at a summer resort like Nice, where the whole world comes to take the sun and water, you cannot find a man with whiskers and tinted glasses who never appears in a bathing suit, always wears clothes covering him to the wrist and ankles, like an undertaker? In this weather."

There was no answer. One man shuffled his feet.

Lepic said, "That is all for the present. We have no brains. We have eyes. Let us try to use the eyes to the best of our ability. *Bon soir, messieurs.*"

JOHN spent several hours of every evening in the casinos nearest to Cannes, at Juan-les-Pins or Antibes or the ultrafashionable Palm Beach. The Côte was having a good season. The casinos were crowded with women who glittered as Mrs. Stevens glittered and gambled heavily, so intent on the fall of the cards or the spin of the ball that they paid no attention to the player sitting next to them. The appraisals he made at roulette and baccarat tables were the easiest part of his work. The drudgery came later.

Bellini helped him with names and addresses, occasionally even with floor plans or blueprints of particular villas. But John spent long hours of the night in the shadows outside one or the other of the villas, studying the house and grounds, noting at what hour the occupants came in, the order in which lights went off, and

when the servants first began to stir in the morning. He listened for dogs to bark, other sounds. Later he drew from memory careful sketches showing the height of a wall, and how a tree shadowed a corner of the house, and whether window shutters were regularly closed or left open as a matter of household routine.

He was working against time, always, and Mrs. Stevens handicapped him. Whenever his work took him near a roulette wheel where she was playing, she would welcome him with cries of "Lucky! Lucky Burns! Come over here! I need you! This wheel is *ruining* me!" He finally had to go to Bellini for help.

"I'm having trouble with Mrs. Stevens. She won't leave me alone, and she attracts too much attention. I need a girl to go around with me in the evenings to keep her off."

"I see." Bellini considered the matter, then took one of his business cards out of a drawer and wrote with a scratchy pen. When he had finished, he blew the ink dry.

"*La Plage Nautique*, a beach which advertises small sections of sand open to the public, is near your hotel. Ask for Danielle. She works there. Tell her what you want with her, and how much you will pay. She has had experience with American gentlemen before."

He found the signboard of *La Plage Nautique* not far from the Hotel Midi's *plage privée*. It was one of half a dozen similar signboards along the promenade. Each *plage* had its own chairs and umbrellas for rent, its own paddle boards for hire, its own small row of dressing rooms for the use of its customers, its own *professeur de natation*. He saw from the sign that the *professeur's* name at *La Plage Nautique* was Claude. There was no mention of Danielle, and he was wondering how to find her when a girl in a Bikini came up to the steps where he stood. She smiled at him.

"I am Danielle, *m'sieu*. Do you want to see me or Claude?"

He gave her the card. She read what was on it and said politely, "How-do-you-do, Mr. Burns."

Danielle was 19 or 20, as pretty as a flower. She had the straight nose and heart-shaped face common to many French girls, widest at the level of the eyes and tapering to a delicate mouth and chin. Her hair was a short mop of blond curls, and her figure was still the figure of a young girl, slim and small-breasted. Her skin was golden brown from the sun. She could have been Mr. Burns' daughter, the youngest of three or four.

John thought, damn Bellini. I can't use this child.

He told her what he wanted, feeling more ridiculous each minute. He explained that he was alone in Cannes, liked to visit the casinos in the evening but felt out of place without a companion, did not speak French — Mr. Bellini had recommended her highly — he would pay well for her time — she could be sure it would remain a business arrangement — nothing personal. . . .

He was conscious that she was studying him while he talked, measuring the balding, middle-aged man with the flat feet, wondering how he would behave after the second drink and what he meant by a "business arrangement." He knew what was going on behind her gravely polite expression. But when he finished at last, half-hoping she would think of an excuse to refuse him, she said without hesitation, "I'll be happy to go with you in the evenings, Mr. Burns. Shall I come to your hotel tonight?"

"I'll be glad to call for you. . . ."

"It will be better for me to come to your hotel, I think. Where are you staying?"

He told her. They set the hour and arranged a price. It was very businesslike after the uncomfortable preliminaries. He felt less like a fool.

While they were still talking, Claude, the *professeur de natation*, came up and said, "*Qu'est-ce que c'est?*" to Danielle, smiling professionally at John.

Claude was a little man with a sleek cap of black hair, hardly taller than Danielle but broad-shouldered, slim-hipped and muscled like a weight lifter. He wore only bathing trunks, and ropes

of muscle crawled under his tanned skin when he moved. John, looking at Claude's shoulders, thought idly, a good climber, if he isn't muscle-bound, and immediately, automatically, thief?

The thought stirred him. But he knew it was senseless to suspect anyone simply because of overdeveloped arm and shoulder muscles, and the suspicion left him after he had listened to the conversation between Claude and Danielle, which Mr. Burns, not speaking French, was not supposed to understand.

Claude was not clever enough to be a successful thief. He was small-minded, and as pompous as a man of his size could be. When Danielle had explained what Mr. Burns wanted of her, Claude said, "I do not like the looks of the *type*. He will massage your legs under the table. How do you expect me to feel about that? A man has his pride."

"Oh, spread your pride on a piece of bread and eat it!" Danielle was trying to keep the anger from her voice. "You don't own me."

"I'll spread him on a piece of bread and eat him if he massages your legs." He turned the professional smile in John's direction. "*Au revoir, m'sieu. Enchanté de vous connaître.*"

He walked away, swelling his chest. The muscles rippled in his back.

"Doesn't he approve?" John asked.

"Oh, yes. I'll see you this evening, Mr. Burns. Please excuse me now."

DANIELLE met him in the lobby of the Midi that night, and regularly afterward. Usually they had dinner together before going on to the casinos. Her wardrobe was not extensive, and because he thought she would feel out of place among the expensively gowned women in the Midi's huge dining salon, he took her to smaller, less public restaurants. At the gambling tables he always bought her a handful of 100-franc counters when he bought his own. She liked to play, but she insisted on turning everything back to him whenever she won. Actually she cost him very little.



She was pretty, chic, well-mannered, and demanded no more attention from him than he wanted to give her. As he had hoped, Mrs. Stevens let him alone when she saw that he had a companion, and Francie never paid any great attention to him, beyond a casual greeting when they passed in the hotel or on the beach.

Danielle had the same keep-your-distance air about her that he had first noticed in Francie, but something about her reminded him of someone he had known before. In an attempt to pin the resemblance down, he asked questions.

She had learned English in the French schools and improved it in England, where she had spent nearly a year as lady's maid. The job ended when the lady walked in on Danielle and the lady's husband as Danielle was slapping the husband's face. She was hoping to find another permanent position that did not have complicating factors. In the meantime, Bellini placed her temporarily with summer visitors to the Côte as lady's maid, governess, or — she put it frankly — as social companion for American gentlemen. Between times, she worked for Claude at *La Plage Nautique*, collecting rentals for the beach chairs and umbrellas, or simply standing around ornamentally in a Bikini so gentlemen could admire her figure and possibly decide to patronize the *plage*.

"Doesn't Claude ever get jealous, or resent having people stare at you?" John asked.

"All he cares about is the money it brings in. Besides, he has nothing to be jealous about. I only work for him."

"He swelled his muscles at me the first day I talked to you."

She laughed. "Those muscles. You needn't be afraid though. They're all he has. Nothing upstairs. It's too bad."

"Why is it too bad?"

She said seriously, "He wants me to marry him. I'd like to get married, raise half a dozen children, darn their socks and cook soup for them. I like babies and cooking soup. But Claude . . ." She shook her head doubtfully.

They were dining at Les Ambassadeurs, on a low mezzanine

overlooking the main-floor dining room. While John was waiting for the waiter to bring his change, he looked down at the floor below and saw his old hunting and mountaineering companion, Paul du Pré.

The white dinner jacket caught his eye first. Paul was alone, and sat facing him directly. The subdued light was too dim for John to see his face clearly, but there was something, a kind of rigidity in the way he sat, which warned John that Paul's attention had been attracted. He turned his head, not too quickly, and then, as the waiter came back with his change, stood up to draw Danielle's chair away from the table.

She said something to him. He did not hear the words, but he smiled and followed her away from the table, letting his shoulders sag and his stomach push forward, trying to shrink into his clothes. He did not dare turn around to see if Paul had moved. He did not look back until they were outside in the street. Paul had not followed. He knew he could not return to the casinos again. He said to Danielle, "I don't think I'll go to the casino tonight. Not tomorrow night either." He disliked what he was doing, but she had given him an opportunity he needed.

Danielle said, "What's the matter, Mr. Burns? Did I offend you, talking about Claude, about getting married?"

"You didn't offend me, Danielle." He did not try to meet her eyes. "I'm just suddenly tired of gambling, I guess. I've really enjoyed your company."

She turned away. He said lamely, "Wait a minute, I owe you some money. And I don't want you to think . . ."

"Give the money to Mr. Bellini for me, please. Good night."

It was an unpleasant way to end a pleasant relationship, but he had to get rid of her one way or another, and with a reasonable excuse. He could not take the chance of meeting Paul face to face somewhere under the bright lights of the gambling tables. He would have to go ahead with what he had, and trust that he had enough to bait at least one effective trap.

HE HAD three prospects for the thief. Le Chat would have robbed, or attempted to rob, all of them.

Mrs. Stevens was the first and most obvious. His second choice was an American couple, the Sanfords. They were as well known on the Côte for their huge parties as they were for Mrs. Sanford's emeralds. She frequently drank too much champagne to be cautious about her jewelry, and the house guests she invited to her famous *galas* at the Château Combe d'Or were generally people who brought jewelry of their own to put on display. Mimi Sanford always announced the most elaborate *gala* of the year at the end of the summer season, when her social rivals had exhausted themselves. John had hopes for the *gala*, if everything else failed.

His other choice was the wife of a rich Brazilian coffee planter named Souza.

It was not long before John realized that another man was equally interested in the dazzling jewels that were being worn at Cannes that season. He noticed a thin, elderly man with white hair and a white guardsman's mustache who spent his afternoons on a bench in the little park across the boulevard from Van Cleef & Arpels' window, usually with a copy of the *Continental Daily Mail* for company. He did not remember to turn the pages of his newspaper as often as he should, and his clothes were more appropriate for London weather than for the Côte.

John had no opportunity to put Bellini on to him until the day after he saw Paul at Les Ambassadeurs. When he went to Bellini to report, he found the *Continental Daily Mail* reader twisting his mustache points in Bellini's office.

He said, "I didn't mean to interrupt. I'll come back later, Bellini."

Bellini said, "Mr. Paige was just leaving. Have you gentlemen met? Mr. Paige, Mr. Burns."

Mr. Paige said, "How-do-you-do?" jerking his head quickly at John. "Just about to go. You'll do what you can for us, Bellini?"

Bellini giggled helplessly after the man had left the room. "He wants to get in touch with Le Chat," he said.

"Who is he?"

"A special agent from a London insurance company. They've been badly hurt by claims, and he wants to make an offer for the jewelry before it is broken up. I represent the company myself, in a small way. He hoped I would have heard if the jewels had been offered on the market."

"What did you tell him?"

"The truth. That I had not heard of a single stone being offered. This is a very clever and cautious thief, John. The police are increasing pressure on the *milieu* every day, trying to pop him to the surface like a seed from a grape. It is time to get started, John. You will want help. How many?"

"Half a dozen good men."

"What is good?"

"Strong, active and handy with a blackjack. Some of our old bunch, if you can get them. Like Coco and Le Borgne."

Bellini giggled. "There is a small house for rent on the Rue Georges Clemenceau." Bellini took a key from his desk. "Go there at seven o'clock tonight. You may find some old friends waiting for you."

After he left Bellini, he had lunch and went down to the beach. For the first time, John went to *La Plage Nautique* rather than to the *plage privée* of the Midi for his regular afternoon appearance in the sun. He wanted to see Danielle, if only to say hello. He still felt vaguely guilty about dismissing her.

She was not at the beach. He remembered that Bellini had spoken of other work for her. Claude strutted up with his professional welcoming smile, his fine muscles rippling. He and John talked mostly in pantomime. John said "*chaise*" and "*umbrella*" with gestures, and "Danielle?" raising his eyebrows. Claude gave him the chair and the umbrella, but no news of Danielle. He didn't know, or didn't want to say. He set up John's chair, cocked the umbrella over it and went away.

John closed his eyes. He made up his mind not to think at all

until it was time for him to talk to Coco and Le Borgne. Seven o'clock would come soon enough. He was half asleep when he became aware that someone stood in front of his chair and was looking at him. He came fully awake at once, still with his eyes closed. His first thought was, Paul? then, Oriol? He breathed twice, keeping his muscles slack and opened his eyes.

It was Francie Stevens. Her brief bathing suit was wet from the sea. Drops of water sparkled on her arms and shoulders. "Good afternoon, Mr. Burns," she said, smiling.

He had never seen her smile like that. He had wondered more than once what an expression of animation would do for her. Now he knew. She was alive, vital, sparkling. He did not wholly like the change. There was something in her expression that made him uneasy. He said, "Hello. Where did you spring from?"

"The diving raft. I saw you come down to the beach. I wanted to ask you a question." She laughed breathlessly. "I'm kind of excited, I guess. You needn't be, though, because I haven't talked about it to anyone else yet. You're Le Chat, aren't you?"

CHAPTER 3

ood muscular control had always been his most valuable asset.

He kept his face blank and his muscles loose. He felt a strong urge to swallow and fought it down. He said, "I'm what?"

"You don't want me to shout it out loud, do you?" She nodded to indicate the sun bathers lying on the beach near them. "Somebody might understand English."

He put his hands behind his head, stretching. It gave him a chance to swallow, ease his tight throat. "If I'm the man you say I am, you'd better call the police. I might be dangerous."

"I don't think you're so dangerous. And I'm not going to call the police. For a while, anyway. I want you to hear how clever I was, first. Come on, we'll walk down the beach. We can't talk here."

He was still marking time when he got up from the chair, going through Mr. Burns' movements. He had no ideas, only a realization of pressing danger.

They walked on the hard wet sand at the edge of the sea. She swung her bathing cap by its strap.

"My, it's a lovely day," she said breathing deeply. She went on conversationally, "I would never have suspected you except that I always have to look out for Mother. People have tried to steal her jewelry before. When I read about the — you — in the papers, I was sure that Mother would catch your eye. At first I was looking for somebody tall and athletic and muscular, the young man on the flying trapeze, or one of those over there, for example." She pointed at a pair of beach tumblers doing flip-overs on the sand. "But then I realized that nobody who was really a human fly and an acrobat would leave so many signs around to *prove* he was a human fly and an acrobat. The answer had to be that you wanted everybody to be on watch for a kind of superman. So, of course, you wouldn't really be a superman at all. Just someone ordinary, like Mr. Burns. And there was Mr. Burns, right under my nose."

"Very logical. I wish you would tell me how I managed all those thefts, if I'm really not a superman. According to the papers —"

"I don't think you're really as stodgy as you try to look, but that's beside the point. You aren't a superman, you're a gang."

"I am?"

"Certainly. You're just the front man. And the brains, of course."

"Thank you. Have you identified my helpers?"

"Only one so far. The cute French girl." Francie turned her head to ask him in a friendly way, "Am I impressing you with my cleverness?"

"Not yet."

"I'll come to it. You were pretty good, everything considered, and it's hard to put a finger on what I mean, but you're not quite

convincing, John. You don't talk quite the way an American businessman ought to talk, or act like one. Particularly an insurance man. I was engaged to an insurance man once. For a week." She laughed. "All he ever talked about was insurance. And baseball. You never even mention your business, or baseball, or television, or Hopalong Cassidy, or politics, or wage freezes, or high prices, or anything that you ought to talk about. You're just not American enough to carry it off."

He said tolerantly, "Francie, you're a nice girl but you have too much imagination. You're going to cause me unnecessary trouble if you go around telling people about the famous jewel thief you've discovered. I'm on a vacation. I want to relax, not explain my way out of a French jail. If I can prove to you that I left New York six weeks ago, will you forget this nonsense?"

"No."

He knew from her triumphant tone that she was about to play her top card. "I cabled my ex-boy friend in New York and had him check up on all the Burnses in the insurance business. They're all present and accounted for. You don't exist. So how could you have been in New York six weeks ago?"

It was so hot in the open sun that most of the sun bathers had gone under cover of the umbrellas or were in the water. He was sweating under the harness next to his skin, but he felt cold inside. He could only mark time; take a step, leave a footprint, stop when she did, go where she led. He was on a leash.

She said, "Are you going to rob Mother first or Lady Kerry?"

"Lady Kerry, in the circumstances. Who is she?"

"Don't be backward. I'm not going to give you away, John. I told you I liked excitement, and you're it, for the time being. Lady Kerry is the high-nosed English character your cute girl friend went to work for this afternoon."

"I don't suppose I could convince you that I never saw Danielle in my life until a few days ago, or that I didn't know she had gone to work for Lady Kerry until you told me."

"Certainly not. I'm only surprised that you hope to get away with such an obvious plant. The Kerry jewels are famous."

He laughed, and the laugh was not wholly an effort to keep Mr. Burns alive as long as possible. The Kerry jewels were as famous as she said, but every thief in Europe knew they were only clever copies of the once valuable originals, which had long since gone to bolster the sagging Kerry fortunes. It was too bad he could not explain the joke.

Francie said, "If I were you, I'd leave Lady Kerry alone and rob Mother. Even the French police are going to be smart enough to arrest your girl friend after Lady Kerry's jewelry disappears, and you wouldn't want that to happen. Is Danielle your mistress?"

"No."

"It wouldn't be gentlemanly of you to say yes, would it? I'm sure you're a gentleman. It's one of the things I like about you. Gentleman thief has such a nice sound." She patted his arm. "Aside from that, you can make a good thing out of Mother's jewels. They're insured for \$72,500, not counting the diamond-and-emerald dog you helped her win at roulette. It would be a fine thing for everybody concerned if you would steal them. You'd make a nice profit, she'd have the fun of spending the insurance money all over again, and the French national economy would be benefited to the extent of \$72,500."

"How would you suggest that I go about it?"

She frowned. "It's a problem, of course. She's never had a personal maid, so it would be impossible to plant anyone on her, and she leaves the jewel case in the hotel safe all the time except when she's asleep in the same room with it. She's careful about bolting her door, too. Are you light on your feet?"

"When I don't stumble over young women with silly ideas."

"I could arrange to leave my door unlocked some night. You could get in that way. Or why couldn't I steal them myself and smuggle them to you? You could send one of your men to get into her room sometime when she's not there and leave marks at

the window to show that The Cat had come down from the roof by rope ladder. Of course, you couldn't have the diamond-and-emerald dog, because it isn't insured, but the rest of it is plenty. Another scoop for Le Chat, more publicity in the newspapers, and the police absolutely baffled. As the French say, *voilà!* What could be prettier?"

"Don't talk so loud. Pretending for the moment that I'm really an honest insurance man, I wouldn't want anybody to hear us planning to beat a London insurance company out of \$72,500." His confidence was returning, slowly. Even if Mr. Burns were to survive only on a leash, it was still survival. He said, "Besides, they wouldn't pay the claim."

"They'd have to."

"Not if the diamond-and-emerald dog were left behind."

"It has nothing to do with them. It's not insured."

"That's why they'd fight the claim. They're not stupid. A professional thief wouldn't pass up the only piece of jewelry not covered by the policy, simply by accident. Your mother would have a lot of explaining to do, in that case. I'm sorry to be so discouraging just when you are launching your career as a thief, but the only way you could collect the insurance without answering awkward questions is to make a clean sweep."

"I'm not going to let you have the dog. I'll just have to think more about it, that's all."

She put on her bathing cap. While she was tucking her hair in and fastening the strap, she said, "I'd like you to join Mother and me for a drink this evening. We haven't seen you at Le Petit Bar lately, and I may have some new ideas by then. Eight o'clock."

"I'll be glad to, some other time. I don't think I can make it tonight."

"You'd better, if you know what's good for you. Eight o'clock sharp, John."

She smiled sweetly, turned her back, took a few running steps, and made a clean dive into the shallows. She came up on her back

five yards farther out, lifted her hand to wave, then turned over and swam away, slim brown arms and white cap bobbing in the blue water.

JOHN tried to sleep during the heat of the afternoon. He put the Do Not Disturb sign on his door, drew the window blinds, stripped, took a cool shower, made all the preparations to rest, and lay awake, sleepless. Bellini had chuckled automatically when he told him about Francie but had obviously been startled. He agreed that John had no choice but to humor her for the present. Bellini also had some news to impart. Paige had come to see him. "He has been talking to Lepic," Bellini said. "He wants to put *récompense proportionnelle* advertisements in the newspapers — a reward for anyone who returns the jewelry, and no questions asked. You know the police do not like them because they increase the market value of stolen goods. He knows it, too, and was surprised when he asked Lepic for authority and Lepic told him to go ahead, without growling about it. He gained the impression that Lepic did not think newspaper advertisements would make a difference one way or the other, as far as recovery of the jewelry is concerned, which is generally true enough. But Lepic sounds much too amiable. He has something up his sleeve. Expect something unusual from him."

John could not sleep. He got up, pulled the mattress from the bed to the floor and used it as a tumbling mat for half an hour. He was streaming with sweat before he finished, but he felt better for the exercise. After he had bathed, he reconstructed Mr. Burns with particular care; the harness, the padded shoes, a touch of dye at the hair roots, a razor for the balding temples, an American necktie.

He could not get over the feeling that Francie held him on a leash. Mr. Burns would be on hand for cocktails at eight o'clock, if he knew what was good for him. Mr. Burns would provide excitement to order. Mr. Burns would steal her mother's jewels when

she told him to, but would be careful not to take the diamond-and-emerald dog. It was on a leash, too, and it was worth \$5000. Mr. Burns was only good for 20 years at La Maison Centrale.

The daylight was fading when he reached the house on the Rue Georges Clemenceau. It was seven o'clock exactly. He saw no one in the street, a sign that Bellini had sent him good men. He used his key, turned on several lights, found a radio and tuned in a Paris musical program. Someone pulled the cord of the old-fashioned doorbell almost immediately.

The six men came in singly, a few minutes apart. Le Borgne was heavier and grayer than he had been in the maquis, and had a respectable glass eye instead of a patch over the empty eye socket. Coco had not changed at all. He was a small man with a wide, lipless mouth, tight and mistrusting. John did not know the other men. He passed cigarettes, saying, "Have one from an old friend."

John saw recognition come to Le Borgne first, then to Coco. Coco said "No" doubtfully, and then "Yes!" He took John by both arms. "Le Chat! John the Neck-breaker! But what a stomach you've put on, man. Give me your hand so I can make sure, and not too much with the fingers. I am no Boche sentry, remember."

They shook hands. One of the men he did not know said "Le Chat!" in a different tone, and he heard it repeated. It was a bad name in the *milieu*. Even Coco took his hand back quickly. His eyes grew hard again, after his first enthusiasm.

John said, "The Cat you knew, Coco. Not the one the police are hunting."

"There is only one Cat," Coco said. "I read the papers."

"There are two."

Le Borgne broke the silence that followed. He said, "Talk some more, John."

He talked for half an hour. He used Bellini's name more often than was necessary, for the value it had with these men, while he explained what he had done and what he hoped to accomplish. He passed around his sketches of the two houses they were to

watch for the thief, and pointed out probable points of entry into them. He showed on the sketches where shrubbery would give cover for them to watch the points of entry, and where they could make a safe rendezvous. He explained the household routines, the habits of the householders, where they slept and at what hours. He said, "I don't expect anything to happen at the Combe d'Or before the *gala* next week-end, but you'll have to be ready just the same."

He divided them into two groups; Coco with two men to watch the Brazilian couple, Le Borgne and the others for the Combe d'Or.

A young man with an evil gypsy face threw his cigarette on the floor. He said, "All right. We know what you want from us. What do we get out of it?"

"You get the thief. The Sûreté will take the pressure off when they have him. You can go on about your business again."

"It's not enough. The *flics* have not interfered with my business. If I am going to sit out on my tail all night every night under a bush, someone will have to pay for it."

Another man said, "That goes for me."

John had not considered the possibility that others would have a lesser personal interest than his own in the capture. While he hesitated, Le Borgne said, "He's right, John. You and I and Coco have our necks to save. It's different with the rest of them."

"What did Bellini promise you?"

The spokesman for the bargainers said, "Something if we catch him, nothing if we fail. It's fair enough. But we want to know what the something will be."

"He has stolen jewelry worth a hundred million francs, and none of it has been shopped off yet. Bellini won't hand him over to the Sûreté without squeezing him first."

"How can Bellini hold it back?" the spokesman asked, practically. "Naturally the thief will talk."

"Let him talk. A large London insurance company has insured most or all of it. Their man is offering *récompense proportionnelle*

for the recovery, no questions asked, and Bellini should be able to get 20 percent out of him. Twenty percent of a hundred million to divide around will pay for several nights of sitting under a bush."

He let them work out the arithmetic for themselves. They seemed satisfied.

"Don't worry about us," Coco said. "Next time you hear from us, we'll have this imitation Cat in a basket. Eh, there, citizen of the Republic?"

He dug the gypsy in the ribs. The gypsy said something that was obscene even for a gypsy. And then he said, "Wait a minute. What about you?" He was talking to John. "What will you be doing while we squat all night under a bush, eh?"

"I have a trap of my own to watch. I think he will come to me first, if he comes."

"Do we share alike, regardless?"

"You share in everything. Bellini gave you his word. I give you mine."

After they had gone, John closed the house and walked back down the Rue Georges Clemenceau to the yacht harbor and La Croisette. The illuminated face of the clock in the old stone tower on the hill overlooking the harbor said five minutes to eight.

He entered Le Petit Bar at eight sharp, obedient to the leash.

Francie was there with her mother and a man who sat with his back to the door. When the man turned his head to speak to Mrs. Stevens, John saw the tip of the fierce guardsman's moustache. Mr. Paige's path was crossing his with increasing regularity.

Mrs. Stevens glittered even more brightly than usual. The diamond-and-emerald dog was pinned to the shoulder of her dress, she had diamonds in her ears, diamonds on her fingers and diamonds on her wrists. Her lipstick was, as always, lopsided, and she drank champagne from a glass with red smears on the rim. She was dressed for a good time and seemed to be having one.

Francie greeted John. She said to her mother, "Mr. Burns is taking me to Monte Carlo."

"Good." Her mother tossed off the last of her champagne. "We'll all go to Monte Carlo."

"You can't come. You've had your share. If he's as lucky as you say he is, I want him for myself."

"Since when have you taken up gambling?" Mrs. Stevens winked at John. "You've done something to my daughter, Lucky. I don't know what it is, but she's almost human lately. Look at her; gambling and everything. She's even wearing my beads. I don't know what's come over her."

The necklace was hard to ignore. Francie wore a black, strapless evening gown, very plain in the way that only Dior or Schiaparelli could make plain black dresses. She had done her hair so as to expose her ears, with sapphire earrings at the ear lobes. The blue of the stones at her throat and ears, matching and emphasizing the blue of her eyes, produced an effect that could not have been accidental. It was as if she had chosen deliberately to display the necklace and earrings, not as ornament but as they might be displayed on a model, for themselves.

Mrs. Stevens said cheerfully, "Well, if I can't go with you, I'll have to go somewhere else. I'm going to stay up until breakfast. I've got a new roulette system. Do you gamble, Mr. Paige?"

Mr. Paige did not take the hint. He said absently that he did not enjoy gambling. He was clearly preoccupied with Mrs. Stevens' display of jewelry.

Francie said firmly, "Good night, Mother. Good night, Mr. Paige," and took John's arm.

He stopped her when they were in the foyer of the hotel. "What's going on?" he said.

"I want to gamble."

"You never gambled before. And you don't have to go as far as Monte Carlo to start."

"I told you. I want to go to Monte Carlo. You're taking me."

"No."

"Yes, you are." She had stopped smiling. "Otherwise we'll go

back to Mother and Mr. Paige and talk about Le Chat. You know who Mr. Paige is, don't you?"

"Francie, you're crazy! Even for a joke . . ."

"I'm not joking, Mr. Burns. Are you taking me to Monte Carlo, or back to Le Petit Bar?"

He said, "I'll have to change my clothes."

"I'll wait for you here. Don't be too long."

He did not know what Francie was planning, whether Monte Carlo was only a whim or something else. He could only go where she led him. At least, the accident of her mother's decision to stay out all night to try a new roulette system saved him from having to leave his best bait for the thief waiting and unguarded.

He had been watching the bait for four nights. Mrs. Stevens ordinarily came in at one or two in the morning, Francie about the same time. According to his timing, they were both sound asleep by three. It left an hour or an hour and a half before the light of early summer dawn for a thief to get at the red-leather jewel case that remained in Mrs. Stevens' room only while she slept. Every night he spent the vital hour and a half waiting patiently in the dark by the small window of his bathroom. If the thief came at all, John knew how he would come.

His room was on the third floor back, while the Stevens' suite was fourth floor front, but the windows of both bathrooms opened into a tiny light well that offered a safe, hidden passage up through the interior of the building. There was a hatch at the basement level and a skylight in the roof. During John's first night in his new room, he waited until very late, then stripped to a pair of shorts and went up the light well as a mountain climber goes up a cleft in the rock, back and feet braced against the blank walls. One exploration was enough to satisfy him that the thief could enter the shaft either from the skylight above or the hatch below. He was sure of his own ability to bottle the thief once he heard sounds of movement in the shaft. All of his preparations had gone toward that moment.

Now, for one night at least, the watch was unnecessary. He could forget Mrs. Stevens temporarily. The invisible leash kept him from forgetting Francie. She was waiting where he had left her. The magnificent necklace sparkled at her throat like an invitation.

He hired a car at the taxi stand across the boulevard from the hotel, and they drove to Monte Carlo by way of the Middle Corniche. The road, high up on a cliff after they had left Nice behind, followed the curves of the coast, in and out and around above the sparkling lights of Beaulieu-sur-Mer and Villefranche and Cap d'Ail below. The stars were bright, the night air pleasantly warm, the view magnificent.

He said, "Tell me why you wore the necklace tonight. Do you expect me to steal it?"

"Not right away. I thought you might like to examine it first. It's worth \$11,000. Shall I take it off?"

"I'll take your word for it. I meant why did you wear it tonight, when you never wear even a ring ordinarily?"

"I don't like jewelry, ordinarily."

"Why?"

She shrugged. "Just one of those things. Some people don't like parsnips."

"That's not a reason."

She did not speak again for some time. The car hummed along quietly, roared for a minute as they passed through a tunnel bored into the rocky cliff, then hummed again in the open. Starlight dappled the sea below the cliff.

"Mother owns 17 oil wells," Francie said abruptly. "I'll inherit them."

"So with that necklace around your throat, you feel as though you're \$11,000 worth of diamonds and sapphires to any man who smiles at you, and not just a pretty girl at all. Is that it?"

She nodded. "I've got so I don't trust anyone, not even an in-offensive, friendly man like Mr. Burns of New York. It's an un-

pleasant state of mind, when the slightest friendly gesture from a stranger only makes you suspicious."

"It must make it difficult for you to listen to any man who might really be more interested in the color of your eyes."

"It does. Especially if he compares them with sapphires." She laughed humorlessly. "It happened two weeks ago. I left him and rode home alone on the bus. I'm sure the poor man wasn't really interested in the oil wells at all. I felt horrible about it afterward. And, of course, it's nothing you can explain."

"Why did you put on the necklace tonight?"

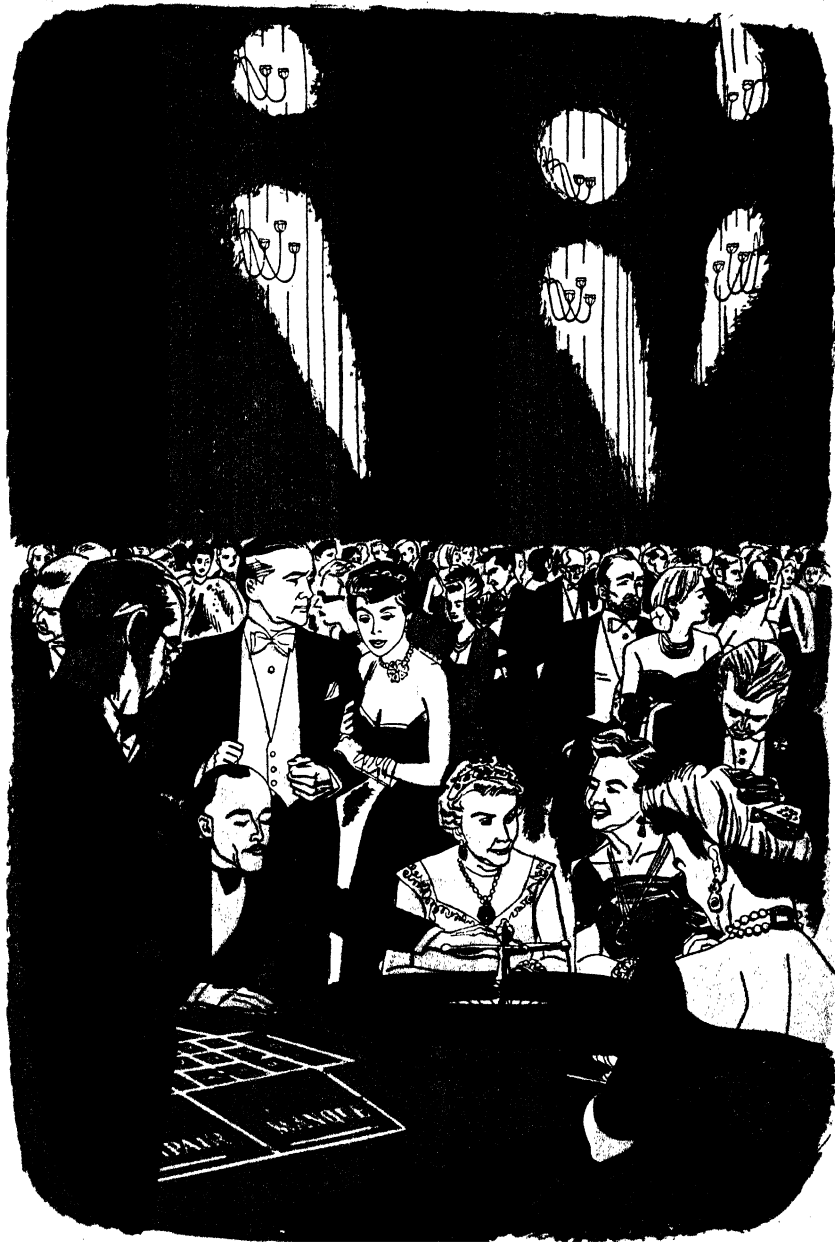
"Because I don't have to worry about ulterior motives in your case. You're an honest thief. We both know what you're after. I can enjoy your company without nasty, suspicious thoughts in my mind. I don't like feeling nasty and suspicious."

HE HAD not been in Monte Carlo since 1939. Twelve years and a war had passed it by without changing anything. The quiet, sharp-eyed men in the foyer stood in the same positions opposite the door, watching the people who entered the gambling salons. Inside, everything was as he remembered it; the flowered wallpaper, the faded gilt, the ornate crystal chandeliers, all the atmosphere of decayed Victorian splendor. The expressionless croupiers looked the same, and he thought he even recognized the dead, burned-out faces of some of the ancient system players at the roulette wheels, hunched over their charts marking down endless chains of figures, *rouge* and *noir*, *pair* and *impair*, *manque* and *passe*. Nothing that he remembered had changed by as much as a single prism on the chandeliers. The American dice tables were new, but they were set unobtrusively back in an alcove, out of the way. Even American dice tables could not affect Monte Carlo. It was timeless.

"What do we do first?"

"Buy counters, I suppose. If you really want to gamble."

"I want to gamble."



They bought counters at the nearest wheel. Francie put 50,000 francs on the red and drew a quick, impersonal glance from the lookout on his high chair at the end of the table. Black won. While Francie was reaching to place another bet, John looked around the salon. His only immediate worry was that Paul might be there, but he did not see Paul. He had only to mark time, obey the leash. It was ten o'clock.

THEY left the casino at four in the morning. Francie had won 600,000 francs at roulette, lost nearly as much at baccarat, experimented without much result either way at the dice tables, and was still genuinely puzzled how anyone could get a thrill out of gambling.

"You win, you lose, and it makes no difference one way or the other. That couple I introduced you to tonight, the Americans, were both betting two and three and four hundred thousand francs at a time, all over the table. The money didn't mean a thing to them." Minutes later she added, "Did you notice her emeralds, or don't you want to discuss business?"

She was talking about Mr. and Mrs. Sanford of the Château Combe d'Or. Le Borgne and his men would waste the night at their watch. The Sanfords were wound up for an evening.

He said, "Even an honest man would notice stones like those. Who are they?"

"Their name is Sanford. I don't really know anything about them except that they're very rich and she gives big parties. Mother and I went to one last year, an enormous thing; all the famous people in France were there. You could have stolen a million dollars' worth of jewels from the guests alone. If she gives another party this year, would you like to go? I can get you invited."

"You're not very loyal to your friends."

"Because I suggest that you rob them? That's silly. Jewels don't mean any more to them than the money they gamble with. They're all part of the show. What's the difference — the real

difference, in terms of good or bad — if they lose ten or twenty million francs at roulette or to a thief?”

“Some people could make a moral distinction.”

They discussed moral distinctions all during the drive back to Cannes and John realized, with great surprise, that he had forgotten the leash he wore and the danger Francie represented to him. He was genuinely enjoying her company.

It was the beginning of a beautiful day when the car drew up in front of the Hotel Midi, and it had been, for John, a much more enjoyable night than he had had reason to expect. He tried to tell Francie something of the way he felt when he left her at the door of her room.

She said, “I had a good time myself. I’m not such awfully bad company, am I?”

She touched the necklace lightly, almost affectionately, with her fingertips. “This is the first time I’ve ever been able to wear these beads, as Mother calls them, without hating it. I’m glad you’re a thief, John.”

“I’m glad you enjoyed yourself.”

“Good night.”

He went to his own room, feeling tired and relaxed and contented. It must be because she’s an American, he thought, taking off his clothes. I’d forgotten what Americans are like.

He lay down on top of the bed, still with the odd feeling of contentment in his mind.

He was nearly asleep when he heard the thin, frightened screaming begin on the floor above. It was Mrs. Stevens’ voice, recognizable in spite of the high, hysterical note. Over and over and over again, endlessly, she screamed, “My jewels! My jewels! My jewels!”

CHAPTER 4

HE DRESSED quickly, then checked deliberately in the mirror; hair, eyebrows, shoes, body profile.

He thought, I've blundered. I've got to do it right, now. Another blunder will finish me.

He left his room, checking Mr. Burns' actions in his mind as he had checked Mr. Burns' appearance. It would be unnatural for him not to respond at once to screams from the Stevens' suite, since he had left Francie at her door only a few minutes earlier. He would not wait for the elevator. He went up the stairs, not too quickly. Mr. Burns was levelheaded.

A number of hotel guests had already gathered in the hallway, most of them half-dressed. John said, "What is it?" to a man in a brightly colored bathrobe.

The man said, "Damned if I know. The cat burglar has been around again, I guess. Somebody was yelling about her jewels."

Two uniformed *agents de police* pushed their way through the crowd and a moment later Mr. Paige arrived. Francie opened the door for Mr. Paige and, seeing John there, hesitated for a moment, then beckoned to him with a quick, demanding gesture. He followed the insurance agent into the room.

One of the policemen had his notebook out and was attempting to question Mrs. Stevens, who still lay on the bed with her hands over her eyes. She made small, tragic, moaning noises.

The *agent* with the notebook said patiently, "If you please, *madame* . . ."

The second *agent* had been looking at Francie for some time. He had a Frenchman's unconcealed admiration for a pretty girl, and he liked Francie's appearance in the strapless black gown. He said, "Perhaps *mademoiselle* could tell us what has happened."

She said to the hotel *directeur*, "Tell him that Mr. Burns — this gentleman — and I went to Monte Carlo for the evening. We re-

turned 15 or 20 minutes ago. He left me at my door, the next room, through there. I had been wearing one of Mother's necklaces, a valuable piece of jewelry, and I wanted to put it back in the jewel case. She woke when I came in and I asked her for the key to her jewel case. She said it was in her purse. I took it out, and when I went to open the case" — she pointed to it, standing open on a commode — "I saw that the strap of the lock had been cut through. I told Mother that she had been robbed."

The *directeur* translated. The *agent* wrote in his notebook.

"I called Mr. Paige, who represents the insurance company, since I thought he would want to hear about the theft immediately," Francie added.

"Very good," the *agent* said. "Value of the stolen jewels?"

The *directeur* asked Francie. She said, "\$61,000, not counting the necklace I was wearing or" — her pause was hardly noticeable — "or a pair of sapphire earrings."

The *directeur* made a mental calculation and said, "Twenty million francs, more or less."

The *agent* whistled soundlessly, made a final note and closed his book. "*Voilà*," he said amiably. "Another nice haul for Le Chat. You may expect *Commissaire Divisionnaire* Lepic within the hour. Touch nothing in the meantime. *Bonjour, messieurs et dames*."

The two *agents* saluted together and left the room. The *directeur* and Mr. Paige followed them. Mrs. Stevens, her hands still over her eyes, lay quietly on the bed. Francie motioned to John in the same abrupt way she had called him in from the hall. They went through the connecting bathroom into her room. She shut the door and put her back to it.

"Very neatly done, Mr. Burns," she said coolly. "You really didn't need any help after all, did you?"

"I had nothing to do with it, Francie."

"Of course not. Your alibi is unbreakable. I'll support it myself — after you return the diamond dog."

"I haven't got it."

"I'll give you until this evening to find it. That should be long enough for you to get in touch with your confederates."

"Francie —"

She interrupted him. "You're in no position to bargain. Don't make me any more resentful than I am, Mr. Burns."

"If you'll stop to think for a minute, you'll realize I couldn't have planned it. We both heard your mother say she was going to be out all night. I don't know why she changed her mind. . . ."

"She lost all her money. The system didn't work."

"All right. She lost her money and came home before she intended, so the jewels were available to a thief. I didn't know that. I couldn't possibly have arranged it."

"I don't know what you arranged, or who you sent to steal the jewels. But I want the dog. I can call Mr. Paige, if it's necessary. Make up your mind."

"What if I say no?"

Her eyes flashed. "Don't be a fool! I'm giving you a chance. If you don't want to take it . . ."

She put her hand on the doorknob. "Well?"

"You'll get the dog."

She opened the door.

In his room again, he changed to shorts and a shirt with half-sleeves, then shaved. His hand was steady and sure with the razor. He had nearly 11 hours in which to think of an alternative.

He heard Mr. Paige calling down the light well from the skylight in the roof. Another voice he took to be Lepic's answered from below. He heard "*Le Chat*" and "*corde*" and "*agilité*."

He heard "*Le Chat*" again when he passed a reporter questioning the harassed *directeur*. Outside, the doorman was discussing the theft with two men, one of whom had a camera which he was aiming up at the front of the building and the big HOTEL MIDI sign. The other man was Paul.

John did not break his stride. Paul was watching the cameraman. John went down the steps, averted his face and was safely by and nearly to the promenade when Paul called, "Mr. Burns!"

John looked back. Paul was coming toward him. He said politely, "Mr. Jack Burns?" He gave no sign of recognition.

"Yes."

"My name is Paul du Pré. A friend asked me to call on you."

He was a well-mannered stranger introducing himself. John said, "How-do-you-do, Mr. du Pré?" and was conscious of his own calm. One more danger on top of the others hardly seemed to matter.

They fell into step. The promenade was almost deserted. It was still too early in the morning for strollers. There were benches at intervals, just at the edge of the walk above the beach. Paul said, "Let's sit down and talk for a minute."

They sat down. Paul said, "Is that a false stomach you're wearing?"

"False stomach, padded shoes, hair dye, false eyebrows, forged passport. What do you want with me, Paul?"

"Not a great deal. Who was the girl with you at Les Ambassadeurs?"

The question was so unexpected, so completely apart from everything in his mind, that it had no meaning at first. He had to think back: Les Ambassadeurs.

He said, "Her name is Danielle."

"I want to meet her."

John felt a slow boil of anger rising in him. He said, "Did you hunt me out behind my false stomach and dyed hair so I could introduce you to a girl?"

"No. No." Paul made a quick, apologetic gesture. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked it that way. But I've been thinking about her so much, seeing her face. . . . I can't get her out of my mind. Didn't you notice how much she looked like Lisa?"

His anger went away. Even in his own trouble, he knew how

deep Paul's hurt was. He said, "A little. I hadn't realized it until now." Paul straightened. "I must meet her, John."

A man and a girl in bathing suits went by on their way to the beach, laughing at some joke. When they had passed, John said, "Is that all you want with me?"

"I'm not really as thoughtless as that. I didn't come here just to bring you my own troubles. What can I do to help you?"

"Nothing, except tell me how you recognized me."

"I saw your profile at Les Ambassadeurs, before I saw the rest of you. When you stood up I thought I was wrong. I didn't see how you could make yourself look so different, so clumsy, but I was interested in the girl as well, and I asked questions until I learned your name and where you were staying. I wasn't certain until I spoke to you back there and heard your voice. It's a good disguise. No one could picture you climbing over roofs."

"How long have you known that I climb over roofs?"

"Since Germaine told me about the police raid and how you got away. I read the article in the *Herald Tribune*. I'd seen you many times without your clothes, so it wasn't hard for me to guess a connection between John Robie, who climbed mountains so well, and Le Chat. Oriol wouldn't talk. I don't know what there was between you two, and I'm not going to ask questions you don't want to answer, but he's bitter about your escape. It's more than just his feeling as *commissaire*. Something personal. He won't say a word, and he's hushed the whole thing over, but I can sense it in him. You made a bad enemy in Oriol."

"I seem to have made a lot of enemies."

"You needn't make any more. What can I do to help you, John? I assume that you went back to your old trade because you needed money. I have . . ."

He stopped. John stood up.

"You can do only one thing for me, Paul," he said. "Leave me alone. Forget you know me. Don't come near me again. Good-bye."

He walked away before he had to look again at Paul's face. It was not easy deliberately to kill a friendship that had been as good as his and Paul's.

BELLINI's source of information at the Hotel Midi was a switch-board operator, from whom he got the quickest kind of service. He listened to the operator's report, then put the telephone back in its cradle and wiped moisture from his face and hands. All four men in the room, Le Borgne, Coco and John as well as Bellini, were sweating.

"Lepic just left the hotel looking pleased with himself," he said. "He was there less than 30 minutes. He must have found something."

"There's never anything to find," John said.

"Maybe the girl has already talked," Le Borgne said.

"I don't think so. She promised me until six o'clock."

Bellini said, "Are you sure she will really talk then?"

"Unless I produce the dog."

Le Borgne and Coco had been there when John arrived, reporting to Bellini as they had been told to do. Nothing exceptional had happened during the night. John alone had failed to cover his end. He had an excuse, but it was still a failure.

Le Borgne said, "It was only bad luck. We haven't finished with him yet. You had better run while you can, John. Leave the rest of it to us."

"It's been too late to run since she found out who I was. I can't get away."

Bellini said cheerfully, "The air of pessimism is not natural to you, John. Have you thought of telling her the truth?"

"It's the only idea I've had. I'm trying to think of a better one."

"It should be enough. She was on your side before. If you can convince her that you don't have the dog, and that her best chance of recovering it is to coöperate, she should keep quiet."

"I think she might."

"What is the objection then?"

"I just don't like it. The more she knows, the more hold she has. She'll have you all on the same leash she has me, if I tell her the truth."

Coco said, "I say hit her on the head, but the next best thing is clearly to talk. If she sells us, we're all sold sooner or later anyway, unless we catch this pig of a burglar."

Bellini nodded. "I agree."

"Just as long as you know," John said. "I'll try it if I can't think of anything else. Whatever happens, keep the traps covered somehow. They may save all our necks."

"On that subject, I don't like the gypsy," Coco said. "I almost conked him last night. He smokes on the job, for one thing. He denies it, but I smelled the tobacco. For another thing, he moves around like a cow with two calves. He will have to be taken off."

John said, "Better take him off today, Bellini."

"What about a replacement?"

"I'll replace him myself, if I'm still loose tonight. If not, get somebody else tomorrow."

John felt suddenly hopeful again, less discouraged by his own failure. A vague idea that had been in the back of his mind was beginning to take shape. He said, "How much do you know about Claude?"

"In what respect?"

"The possibility that he may be our thief."

Bellini chuckled. He said chidingly, "John!"

"I know. He's not clever enough to manage it on his own. But he has the physical equipment for it, and Francie gave me an idea when she told me how she reasoned that the thief had to be one of a gang. Suppose she's right. Suppose the imitation of Le Chat is deliberate, to put the *flics* on watch for Le Chat and no one else. But instead of working alone, as I did, this thief has a clever confederate. Danielle, the brains. She works during the

season for people like Lady Kerry. She can't steal anything herself and hope to get away with it, but she can set up the thefts for Claude, tell him if the stones are worth while, where they are and when they will be available."

"Possible. Always possible," Bellini said. "But it is only a bare theory. Why pick on poor Claude? Why not any of a dozen equally agile and muscular *professeurs de natation*? Or, for that matter, any of hundreds of young men with Claude's biceps?"

"Because Claude has Danielle. The others don't."

Bellini nodded wisely. "You are impressed with Danielle."

"She has a good head, she doesn't like being poor, and in some ways she reminds me of myself at her age. She has a state of mind. I may be misjudging her, but I'm still curious. Have any of the people she worked for been robbed?"

Bellini shook his head. "I am careful about these things. If Danielle, or any of my people, had even been questioned in connection with the thefts, I would have investigated."

John shrugged, then rubbed his eyes. It was more than 24 hours since he had slept last. His mind was dull with fatigue. He was sure there were other important things that Bellini should be reminded to do, but he could not think of them, or of anything else except the coming need to beg his freedom from Francie. It was nearly noon. He had six hours before the deadline.

He said, "I've got to sleep. Can I do it here? I don't want to go back to the hotel while there's still a chance I might run into photographers."

"Of course. Close the door. I'll see that you are not disturbed."

"Don't let me oversleep. I've still got a hope, and I don't want to lose it by failing to get to the beach before six."

"I've never failed you yet, John. And you have much more than a hope with the girl. When she knows the truth about you, that you are not a thief at all, there will be even less reason for her to betray you than there was before."

John went into the next room, Bellini's bedroom, and sat in a

chair against the wall deliberately trying to relax. It did no good. He could not stop his mind from its activity, nor control his thoughts. He saw only Paul, sitting alone on the bench with the hurt of rejection in his face. He thought of Oriol, whose friendship had turned to bitterness at what he believed to be a betrayal, and of Francie, coldly angry at the deception she thought he had played on her.

All three had been his friends. All three would still be his friends, if they knew the truth, and yet his whole instinct was against telling any of them. The feeling was as strong as his faith in Bellini. When he tried to analyze the reason for it, it came to him suddenly that he put his faith in Bellini and Coco and Le Borgne not because they were fellow *maquisards* but because they were outside the law. Francie and Paul and Oriol were not.

It's because you're a thief at heart, he thought, with real surprise. It was the plain truth. He had stolen nothing in 12 years, had no intention ever to steal again, and yet retained a thief's distrust of those who were not thieves themselves. He got up, kicking the chair away, and went into Bellini's office.

"You say tell the girl the truth. The truth about me is that I am a thief, Bellini. I just found it out. The truth about Francie is that she's on the other side, for all her talk; she'll probably send me back to La Maison Centrale, sooner or later, one way or another. Maybe even without trying. If I believed in premonitions, I'd say I had one."

He went back into the bedroom and closed the door.

Bellini looked thoughtfully at the door. For once, he was not smiling. He believed strongly in premonitions.

CHAPTER 5

BELLINI woke John about five. He held a copy of the day's edition of *L'Espoir*.

"Lepic is badly out on a limb, or else he has found something that we do not know about," he said, plainly worried. "I don't like it. He is too cautious to make promises he cannot keep. Read it."

He gave the paper to John, then went back to his office to answer the ringing telephone.

L'Espoir's front page showed a photograph of the thief's latest victim with her lipstick more lopsided than usual, and another of the skylight, with an arrow indicating the thief's point of entry into the light well. The photographs were less important to the story than Lepic's statement, directly quoted, that the Sûreté Nationale promised an arrest in the immediate future.

Bellini came back. "They have started the roundup they promised. Jean-Pierre, in Marseilles, was first."

"They took him?"

"Not yet. He was tipped and got away. But they are looking for him, and if they do not find him they must find somebody. Le Borgne may be next, or Coco. I will have to get word to them quickly."

John put the newspaper down and stood up to put on his coat. He felt calm, rested. He said, "It may not be necessary. If I'm going back to prison, there's no reason why anyone else should go with me. I'll let you know how I come out as soon as I can."

Bellini said, "I am certain that you will be able to win her help." He went to the window and drew the shade up and down. It was Bellini's way of calling a messenger. "Don't be pessimistic, John. It is not like you. Something has happened to you."

He chuckled encouragingly. John said, "Nothing has happened to me, yet."

IN THE STREET John saw a red-fezzed Moroccan on his way to answer the signal of Bellini's window blind. He passed one of the patrolling *agents* on the promenade and thought, it won't take long to happen if it does happen.

His common sense told him he could convince Francie that she had no cause to betray him. But he could not escape the premonition that, whether she meant to or not, she would somehow be the cause of his downfall.

She was sitting under an umbrella on the *plage privée*, reading a book. The second chair under the umbrella was unoccupied.

He said, "May I sit down?"

"It isn't necessary." She indicated an open beach bag on the sand at her side. "You can drop it there."

"I haven't got it."

She leaned forward, deliberately, to look at the clock face in the old tower on the hilltop beyond the yacht harbor. He said, "It's 5:30. In a week or two I might be able to get it for you. I can't do it in half an hour. If you'll let me explain, I'll tell you why."

"I don't want an explanation. I want the dog, Mr. Burns."

It was a flat, cold demand. There was no lightness in her now, none of the friendly mockery with which she had tugged him by his invisible leash before. He knew she would not hesitate to carry out her threat if he did not win her over at once. He sat down beside her and said, "You gave me until six. I still have 30 minutes."

He began to talk, quickly, before she could deny him.

Because he had never told anyone the story before and did not have it formulated in his mind, he began with his escape from the Villa des Bijoux. But it was not the beginning. Neither was the maquis, nor the prison, nor his trial, nor even his first theft. The whole story was his biography. He found that he had to go back further and further, finally as far as his memory took him.

He had been five years old when his father put him on the

rings. There were only two of the Flying Robies to begin with, his father and mother, smalltime acrobats in the smalltime carnivals which played one- and two-day stands in the New England states. He became the third member of the troupe when he was big enough for his father to lie about his age. Before he was 12, he was a competent trapeze flyer. Later he learned to do a walk on the high wire, double as a tumbling clown, substitute for the man who turned somersaults off the trampolin.

"I was always best at something that called for climbing," he said. He had not looked at Francie since he began to talk, but he knew he was holding her. So far. "I was strong. I had a good head for heights, and confidence in myself. Acrobats need absolute faith in their own ability more than anything else. My father lost this when he missed a catch and let my mother go over the end of the net into a bank of empty chairs. He never went on a trapeze again, and he died soon after."

John was left with a few suits of tights, the muscular development necessary to climb a rope hand over hand in a way that made it look simple, and a knowledge of the rest of his trade. When he was 21, he got an offer from a French troupe touring Europe. The troupe was a coöperative venture that had already ceased to coöperate before he arrived to join it. In Nice, where he heard the news, a hotel thief stole what remained of his money, his passport, and all the other means of identification he had.

"I didn't resent it, particularly," he said. He still had not looked in Francie's direction. He kept his eyes on the diving raft that floated offshore, bobbing brightly in the sunlight. "In the carnivals, a mark was always a mark, a sucker, a john, somebody to be cheated. Pickpockets and short-change men were as much a natural part of the business as the clowns. I thought of myself as another mark in a strange territory. It never occurred to me that I could go to the American consul and borrow passage money home. I might have managed that, but my mind didn't work that

way. There were other marks around, plenty of them. I had only to find the right one."

That was the summer of 1936. Shortly afterward, an acrobatic thief climbed a drainpipe up the side of a small villa on Cap Ferrat, got in through an open bedroom window, and made off with the jewels of a British lady while she and her husband slept off the effects of a late evening.

He made 120,000 francs for the night's work, then worth about \$4000, not as much as he would have got later when he had learned the language and how to value stones properly, but enough to allow him to keep up a front until his next theft. The moral aspects of thievery never concerned him. The marks were there and climbing drainpipes was an easier and more profitable way of using his skill to make a living than any other he had known. Le Chat came into being.

That winter he studied French with a group of American students in Paris, read what there was available to him about the valuation of precious stones and followed the society columns as well as lapidary trade journals, which noted the manufacture or sale of outstanding gems. When he returned to the Côte the following season, he already knew whom he meant to rob, if the proper opportunities presented themselves. He was cautious, confided in no one, worked alone and planned each theft carefully. Le Chat flourished.

He went on to tell her about the events that had led up to his purchasing the Villa des Bijoux and his retirement to the life of a country gentleman. At this point he hesitated. But Paul and Oriol were part of the story, even Lisa, and he could not find a way to avoid the continuation. He made it as brief as he could, up until the publication of the article about Le Chat in the Paris edition of the *Herald Tribune*. From that point he told her everything, step by step, from his escape at the villa down to that afternoon. When he had finished, he looked at his watch. It was 6:15. The sunlight had begun to fade.

"I can prove enough of it to satisfy you, I think," he said. "It's in your own interest to keep quiet and let me go on with what I'm trying to do. If we catch him, I'll see that your mother's jewelry is the first returned."

He looked at her then and knew he would not need to give any proof. He said in explanation, "I've been talking my way out of 20 years in prison, Francie. I wasn't sure about you. I didn't know how you would take it."

"Why didn't you tell me before? You didn't want to trust me?"

"I'm not trustful by nature."

"But you trust Bellini."

"He's different. So are the others. I had to learn to trust them to survive. Just as I'm trusting you now."

He did not want to talk further about it, or explain why there was an essential difference between his confidence in Bellini and his feeling toward her. He turned to look up at the promenade.

A Moroccan rug peddler was there, holding out his gimcrack wares to the passers-by, wheedling them to buy. But he did not follow anyone far, and he kept his eye on the beach. John raised his hand, palm out, then closed his fist. The peddler walked away.

Francie said, "What was that for?"

"I was sending word to my friends that I'm still available."

AGAIN that night the traps were set and nothing happened. At dawn, Coco and Le Borgne retired to the cave where they had set up housekeeping to keep out of the way of the *flics*, and John returned to the hotel.

He did not see Francie all day. He slept in the morning, made a visit to Bellini afterward. The day's edition of *Nice-Matin* asked baldly: WHAT ARREST AND HOW SOON, M. LEPIC? The plain-clothes *agents* patrolled La Croisette as usual. Everything was the same as it had been for days, except the weather.

The sun still shone hotly in a clear sky, but a mistral had begun to blow from the southwest, and the force of the wind across

the open sea piled waves up on the beach. The Hotel Midi's tiny patch of sand was covered with water nearly to the promenade, and the other beaches farther along, although more sheltered from the direct force of the wind, were not much better. The sun bathers had no place to go except the promenade, which was overcrowded with chairs, mats and cushions. John was making his way through the crowd when he saw Paul. He stood at the edge of the promenade above *La Plage Nautique* watching Danielle and Claude on the sand below, hurrying to move umbrellas and beach chairs back from the encroaching waves. John walked over to Paul's side. "She does look like Lisa. I hadn't realized it before," he said.

"Am I to recognize you?" Paul did not turn his head.

"We've been introduced."

"I'm glad to see you still looking well, Mr. Burns. In spite of what you said the last time we talked."

"I was expecting trouble the last time, Paul. I didn't want to have you involved. It's the only reason I said what I did. Someday I'll explain."

Paul shook his head, puzzled. "Someday it will be too late to explain. I don't understand you. You're taking a terrible risk. For what? It can't be just money."

All the time they talked, Paul had been watching Danielle. The waves were coming in fast. Claude's fine muscles bulged as he caught a heavy paddle board which was about to float off and pulled it to safety. Danielle, wading knee-deep for the paddle, was as quick and graceful as a sea nymph.

John said, "Do you want me to introduce you?"

"Will you?" Paul accepted the offer hungrily.

They went down the steps to the sand.

He had an excuse in the money he still owed Danielle and had forgotten to leave with Bellini. The introduction of Paul as a friend was natural and casual. Danielle was businesslike, polite. Claude was too busy to pay attention to any of it. When Paul

helped Danielle catch a chair that was about to drift away, John took the opportunity to walk off and leave them together. The rest was out of his hands.

THE mistral had stopped blowing when John made rendezvous at midnight on the hillside above the cottage in Le Cannet occupied by the Souzas. The Brazilians came in at one o'clock, early for them. The lights went off before two. At dawn the milk cart came clattering over the hill. Nothing else had happened.

Before they separated, Coco told him that Le Borgne was complaining of rheumatism after sleeping on the ground of their cave. Le Borgne had nothing else to report except that preparations were going forward at the Combe d'Or for the Sanfords' *gala*. Lights were being strung over the *terrasse* and through the château gardens.

"One-Eye says if they keep stringing lights, there won't be any way for a thief to approach the house except by burrowing," Coco said.

"He'll burrow then," John said. "There'll be two or three hundred million francs there for the taking. I wouldn't pass it up."

Coco did not enjoy life in the cave any more than Le Borgne. It soured him on everything. "I think this dung heap of a thief has retired for good."

John said, "It's only two days since the last theft. Patience."

"I spit in the face of patience! You can talk. You sleep in a warm bed when you sleep. I sleep on a layer of pebbles."

"They'll give you a warm bed at the nearest jail, if you want one," John said.

He was back at the Midi by sunrise. In the afternoon, when he made his regular appearance on the beach, he found Francie and her mother in their usual places.

Mrs. Stevens was asleep in the shade of the umbrella. Francie was reading. She closed her book when she saw John and came to meet him.

"Let's go for a stroll. I've got something to tell you."

They walked down the promenade to the far end of the beach, past the Hotel Napoleon and beyond, to where there was no beach, nothing but rocks and a solitary fisherman squatting with his pole. The patrolling *agents* never came that far.

Francie said, "Mother and I spent all day yesterday cultivating the Sanfords. We've been invited to the *gala*. So have you."

"Why me?"

"I thought you might want to be there, if you expect something to happen. You don't have to go if you don't want to."

He had not counted on the possibility that she would take positive action on her own, and he did not want to find himself at cross-purposes with her. His arrangements were too final, too carefully planned. He said, "I don't need your help, Francie. All I asked is that you keep quiet and give me a chance to work things out my own way. If I slip somewhere and get caught, it won't do you any good to be mixed up with me and a gang of ex-convicts."

"I'm not worried about it."

"There's no sense in taking unnecessary risks."

"Maybe I want to." She was defiant. They did not speak again until they were back at the beach where Mrs. Stevens slept on the sand. Francie picked up her book.

"The *gala* begins next Friday night, and the house guests will stay through Sunday," she told him. She was again the girl he had known before she guessed his identity: withdrawn, disinterested. "If you intend to go, we'd better go together, since I had to explain to Mrs. Sanford that we were particularly close friends in order to get you the invitation. I'll try not to bother you unnecessarily until then."

There was nothing he could say.

THE MISTRAL began to blow again that night. After greeting Coco and Le Borgne, John took a position at the mouth of a culvert from which he could watch the side of the Brazilians' villa



which he had decided was the thief's most likely approach. He took off his clothes and the body harness and exchanged his shoes for the light glove-leather gymnast's slippers he had brought in his pocket. Besides the slippers, he wore only shorts. There was a charged, electric feeling in the air. All three of the watchers on the hill felt it.

The Brazilian and his wife came in at two. The lights came on in the house, burned for a time and went out. Somewhere in the distance a dog barked two or three times. There was no other sound but the rush of the wind through the scrub and the tinny creak of a street light on its pole, no movement but the dancing shadows.

Souza's first shout, more than an hour later, was a wordless yell, meaningless. John thought the Brazilian must be having a

nightmare. A light came on in one of the bedrooms. Almost immediately a woman screamed, and the man gave a different kind of shout, this time of pain. Another male voice inside the house called urgently, words that John could not distinguish. The woman screamed again.

The rest followed quickly. A man's figure appeared suddenly on the roof of a portico, outlined by the glow of the light in the road. He hesitated there, looking back, then climbed a railing and jumped, disappearing from sight as he dropped into the garden below. Seconds later another man stood on the roof of the portico, and a pistol roared, steadied, and roared again. But then John heard the scrape of running feet on the gravel and knew the fugitive had safely reached the road. The gun roared again and the man dropped, not far from the hanging light on its pole. There was a ditch along the roadside and a screen of grass that concealed John. The man with the gun came quickly to roll the body in the road so he could see its face. Because he had never seen *Commissaire Divisionnaire* Lepic before, John did not recognize him. But the dead man was the surly, dark-faced gypsy.

When it was safe for John to move, he went up the hillside to the rendezvous, to tell Coco and Michel that their patience had been for nothing. Another trap had failed.

CHAPTER 6

"I KNOW he wasn't the man we were expecting," he told Bellini, hours later. "It's out of the question."

"I don't see how you can be so certain," Bellini said. "It seems to me that you are challenging your own judgment. I agree that mine is also open to challenge, since it was my own man who betrayed us." He chuckled. "Honor among thieves is not what it used to be. Still, the gypsy was a burglar, as we know."

"A burglar," John agreed. "But not the burglar. He couldn't have robbed Mrs. Stevens, any more than he could have climbed

the marquee chain in Monte Carlo. Both of those thefts were done by a professional."

"He was not entirely an amateur, John."

"I mean that he didn't have the physical ability to pull himself two stories up a hanging rope. It takes training, and more than average strength. He wasn't our man. There isn't a possibility I could be wrong."

"Lepic doesn't seem to agree with you."

Bellini indicated the newspaper he had been reading.

John said, "I'm not convinced of that. What he believes and what he says for publication needn't be the same thing. I think he must know as well as I do that his scheme missed fire. But he promised an arrest and the gypsy can't deny anything. And it makes Lepic look good."

The black scarehead said: *LE VOLEUR EST MORT! THE THIEF IS DEAD!* The article quoted Lepic as saying that the failure of the Sûreté Nationale's most expert men to find and identify John Robie, the man once known as Le Chat, had led him to doubt that the thief they hunted was in fact Le Chat. At the same time that he had continued his search for John Robie, he had arranged an inviting trap for the actual thief with the coöperation of M. and Mme. Souza. Having trapped the thief, Lepic had shot, meaning only to wound him. The bullet, regrettably, had struck a vital spot. The unfortunate criminal had paid for his misdeeds with his life, *hélas!*

Hélas! was conventional in any French newspaper report of violent death. It was the reporter's contribution. Lepic had not expressed his own feelings, neither regret nor triumph. He was a faithful public servant reporting the successful performance of a disagreeable duty so that his detractors could judge for themselves what kind of a man they had been criticizing.

"Do you think he really shot only to wound?" Bellini said.

"I don't know. He was aiming carefully, but it's hard to tell what he was aiming at."

"If he believes his own story," Bellini went on, "he must have wanted the gypsy alive, to talk. The whole thing will collapse unless he traces the stolen jewelry. Still, even if he knows the truth, he has a breathing spell. He escapes further criticism, and he leaves the real thief — meaning you — believing that all is in order for another operation. One thing I do not understand is how the gypsy hoped to succeed with the robbery, John. He knew you were watching the house."

"I gave him what amounted to a blueprint showing how to do it. I told him just what to expect from the thief, when we would wait for him and where we would watch. He got in before we were there, and I suppose he meant to leave the house after we had gone, before anyone awoke. It might have worked, except for Lepic. Do you have anyone who can get close to the *commissaire*?"

"Possibly. What do you want to know?"

"Whether or not he really believes that story he gave the papers. If he doesn't, he'll certainly cover the Sanfords' *gala*, and that means you'll have to take Le Borgne and his men off before they stumble over a *flic* in the dark."

"Who will watch the Combe d'Or, in the event that Lepic does not?"

"I will. As a guest. Francie Stevens got me an invitation, which I declined and which I'm now going to accept after I've knocked my head on the ground and begged her pardon for hurting her feelings by refusing her help."

Bellini tittered. "Pride, John?"

"I don't know. I'm having trouble understanding what it is I feel these days. All I'm sure of is that I wish I could finish it off, one way or another."

MR. PAIGE also wanted to finish off, one way or another. He had a check from the London insurance company for \$62,000 in his pocket, payable to Mrs. Stevens, when he read the newspaper story with his lunchtime cup of tea. After he had finished his tea,

he went to the local commissariat and asked for an interview with Lepic.

Mr. Paige came right to the point. "Shooting the thief wasn't wise, if I may say so. It complicates the matter of tracing the stolen jewelry."

"No one regrets his death more than I do," Lepic said stonily. "It was an unfortunate accident."

"Quite. You're positive he was the man?"

"I have no reason to change the story I gave to the newspapers."

Mr. Paige knew when he was wasting his time. "You know your business." He spoke as mildly as before. "I won't try to interfere. But my principals are not going to be satisfied for a minute until the jewelry comes to light, and my principals have influence in Paris. Disposing of the thief may be enough for your superiors. It won't be for the insurance company. The jewels, Commissioner, the jewels. The total is now 122 million francs, if you have forgotten."

When he had gone, Lepic locked the door, sat down loosely, and looked blankly at the floor.

His ambition had put him into his own trap. Ambition and the desire for the glory that would come from a singlehanded capture of Le Chat had led him into the first mistake. The rest had followed because of his confidence in his own cleverness.

He had set a trap for a thief, the trap had clicked shut, a thief had been caught. Killing had been an accident, as he said; he wanted a confession and the jewelry, not the thief's life. But a dead thief was still the sign of success, and when he stood in the road looking down at the gypsy's body, already savoring the public triumph he had earned, and saw that the man he had killed was not John Robie, it was harder for him to discard the fact of success than it was to discard his belief that John Robie was the man he wanted. The first lie had been to deny that he had expected to catch John Robie. He had tried to qualify his story to the newspaper reporters, but he could not bring himself to confess

failure. Now it was too late. Already the ministry had telephoned from Paris to congratulate him on his success and implied that it would express its appreciation even more tangibly when he had effected a return of the stolen jewelry to its proper owners. That was important. Most important.

He could have denied the truth of the story then. He had not been able wholly to abandon the hope that he might still have his reward. But Oriol, driven at last out of his shell by the report of the death, had come to see the body for himself and flatly told Lepic that he knew the dead man was not the thief, assuming the blame for his own mistakes so that Lepic would not give up the hunt. And when Oriol promised to make a disclosure, at any expense to himself, if it were not carried on, Lepic's shaky hopes of rewards and triumph crashed.

He did not waste his energy damning Oriol for not coming forward sooner. He needed Oriol's help.

"I tell you frankly that your mistakes will cost you your position, *commissaire*," he had said. "As my mistakes will cost me mine, unless between us we find Robie quickly. If we do not take him before he can steal again, we will both be publicly disgraced. We still have a chance. Go home, keep your mouth shut, and stay in touch with me."

"What are you going to do?"

"Be on hand when he attempts another theft."

MR. PAIGE was far from satisfied when he left Lepic. When Mrs. Stevens trapped him in the lobby of the Midi to ask when she could expect her money, he told her that the *commissaire divisionnaire* had said she might expect her jewels back very soon instead. He was vague about how soon was very soon.

Mrs. Stevens sniffed. "Well, all I can say is that it was all very badly managed." She told Francie about it during the afternoon and decided that an immediate investment of her own money at Cartier's and Van Cleef & Arpels was the only sure way to insure

herself against appearing barefooted and in rags at the *gala*. It kept her running from shop to shop for the rest of the day. John found Francie alone on the beach. She wore the zebra-striped bathing suit and lay sunning on the sand with a straw beach hat over her face to shield her eyes from the glare. When he spoke to her, she removed the hat long enough to say hello, then put it back so that it hid her face again. It was not a gesture of rudeness; her greeting was pleasant enough, and the hot sun made an eye shade excusable.

He said, "I shouldn't have been so brusque with you the other day, Francie. I apologize for it. I would have apologized even if I didn't intend to ask for the help you offered me and I refused."

The hat kept him from seeing her expression. She took so long to answer that he thought she was ignoring him. She said at last, "I was trying to bring myself to apologize to you."

"To me? Why?"

"For not minding my own business. I should have realized that you would have to manage your own affairs in your own way. I did, later. That's why I haven't pestered you since."

"You never pestered me, Francie. I tried to explain. I don't want you to get into trouble, if something goes wrong. I wouldn't ask you now if there was any way to avoid it."

"Isn't it all over?"

"No. Lepic didn't get the right thief. I think his story is a smoke screen, that he's inviting another theft. Whether he is or not, I still expect something to happen at the *gala*, and I want to be there." A moment later, he added, "You won't involve yourself. All you have to know about me is that I'm a fellow American at the hotel."

"So that in an emergency I can always claim that you deceived me as you deceived everyone else, and go my own merry way unsullied? Is that what you mean?"

"Yes."

He thought she sighed. He couldn't be certain. He couldn't tell

what she was thinking by watching a straw hat, and he doubted that even if she took the hat away her face would tell him anything. His apology hadn't changed things. She was still the girl he had known first, the one who could sit at a table with him and others, smile when somebody spoke to her, and not be there at all. He had the feeling that she was neither for him nor against him now, only withdrawn.

She avoided him until Friday afternoon, when they were to leave for the Sanford party. On Friday morning the newspapers appeared with a list of guests who were to attend the annual *fin de saison* gala week-end at the Château Combe d'Or.

Among those expected was a one-time American cinema star, now the Princess Lila, whose late wedding to her royal Oriental bridegroom had made international headlines partly because she had been married in a bridal gown decorated with 6000 precious stones, wearing with it her husband's gift of a string of pearls, said to have been originally presented to the Queen of Sheba by King Solomon. There were others nearly as important to Mimi Sanford's social triumph; the heir to a doubtful European throne, a Turkish cabinet minister, minor celebrities of various nationalities and, at the bottom of the list, Mme. Maude Stevens, Mlle. Francie Stevens, M. Jack Burns and M. le Comte du Pré de la Tour.

The unexpected news that Paul would be at the *gala* was a blow. John and Francie had met in the lobby and were waiting with the luggage while Mrs. Stevens made a last-minute flying trip to Cartier's to buy a diamond sunburst she could not possibly do without after hearing about Princess Lila's pearls, which were insured for 100,000 pounds sterling. John said, "I didn't know Paul even knew the Sanfords. I'll be handcuffed with him there. He'll keep his eye on me every minute."

"He's your friend. Don't you trust him?"

"I have to trust him. He could give me away any time. But trusting him and trying to explain to him are two different things."

"Why? You explained to me when you had to."

He said, "Paul is honest in a way you aren't and if I am hurting your feelings again, it's because you asked me to. You're not a thief, but you would have helped me steal your mother's jewels. Maybe a touch of crookedness will help you understand why I feel a debt to Bellini and Coco and Le Borgne. It's the only thing that kept me here from the beginning. I could have got away, but they were my friends, the only friends I ever had before I knew Paul. That they're crooks doesn't make any difference. I owe them my help. Paul could never understand that. I don't know how to describe him except to say that he's so honest himself he can't even picture thieves and honest men in the same frame. You have to be one or the other, in his eyes; an honest man on the side of honest men, or a thief among thieves. He can understand me as one or the other. But for what I am, a crook who doesn't behave like a crook and still won't cross over . . ."

Francie said, "He should be able to understand loyalty."

He made a helpless gesture. He could not explain further. "I don't know. If I can't do anything else, I'll have to try to explain, but I don't want to."

"Any more than you wanted to explain to me."

"No."

"You're even a bigger fool than I thought you were." It was neither an insult nor a joke, only a statement of fact.

He left her before she could see his irritation. He called Paul's number and was told that M. le Comte would not return before Monday. Because he knew of only one other place where he might hear news of Paul, he walked down the promenade to *La Plage Nautique*.

Claude and Danielle were quarreling about something. Claude said, "*Ah, flûte*," insultingly and walked away as John came down the steps. He did not bother to turn on his professional smile for Mr. Burns' benefit.

Danielle was flushed and angry. John said, "Have you seen Paul?"

"He was here this morning. I don't think he'll ever come back. That pig Claude! I could kill him! He insulted Paul. He called him an awful name."

"Why? What did Paul do?"

"Nothing, really. But he's been here every day since you brought him, and even Claude couldn't help seeing how he feels about me. This morning Paul asked me to a week-end party at a friend's house, a *gala* some Americans are giving. . . ."

"I know about it. I'm going myself."

"You know how respectable it will be then. But Claude — oh, he said horrible things to Paul, swore at him, wanted to fight him." She shook her head violently, so that tears flew from her eyelashes. "Paul is so clean and gentle himself. He doesn't understand how anyone can behave like an animal."

"He's made quite an impression on you."

"Of course he has. He's the finest man I ever met."

She wiped her eyes on her wrist. John said, "Are you going to the *gala* with him?"

"I can't. I'd only embarrass him."

"If you mean because someone might ask questions, wonder who you are . . ."

"It isn't that." She wiped her eyes again. "I'm sure he wants an opportunity to ask me to marry him. I don't know how to answer him. I like him a lot, Mr. Burns, but I don't love him."

"I thought you had a practical attitude about those things, Danielle."

"Not with Paul. He's too decent. And he was too much in love with Lisa. He told me about her. I can't substitute for her. I can't give him back what he's lost. I'd only make him miserable in the end. And myself." She sighed unhappily. "I wish you had never brought him here."

"I'm sorry, Danielle. I didn't know it was going to turn out so badly."

It was too late for him to do anything about Paul, either for

Danielle's sake or his own. Nothing remained for him but to go to the *gala*, and hope that he would be able to meet the problems as they arose.

THE Château Combe d'Or was one of the show places of the Côte. It stood alone on top of a hill above Cannes, commanding a view of the entire sweep of sea between the Estérel hills on the west and the Maritime Alps on the east. On a clear day, George Sanford could see from his front window the blue of Corsica visible to the southeast. He was proud of his restoration of the 15th-century château. An ancient growth of ivy climbing one side of the tower made the castle appear, from a distance, as medieval as it might have been originally. But part of the old moat that once surrounded it had been turned into an emerald-tiled swimming pool, the rest planted with shrubs and flowers, and the former barren square of the courtyard was now a clipped green lawn between the pool and a wide, flagged *terrasse*, where guests could dine or dance on a summer evening or drink their host's good brandy and smoke his fine cigars.

Mimi Sanford came dripping from the swimming pool to welcome Mrs. Stevens, Francie and John, and invite them to change for a swim before the sun went down. But she was a good hostess. She did not make it necessary for Mr. Burns to explain why he could not accept an invitation to the swimming pool.

He had already studied the floor plans of the château. Bellini's connections made it easy to obtain copies of the architect's blueprints for the reconstruction. Bachelor guest quarters were in the west wing, one of two which extended from the main body of the building like arms embracing the *terrasse*. As he had expected, he was given a room in the west wing. Francie and her mother and the Princess Lila were lodged in the central building, the old castle keep.

John thought it was safe for Mr. Burns to have learned enough French to ask the man who carried his bag to his room if le

Comte du Pré de la Tour had arrived at the château. The man went to inquire and very soon a knock sounded at the door.

It was Paul. "The valet told me you wanted to see me."

"I asked him if you were here. I didn't expect him to send you."

"My room is just across the hall. What do you want?"

"I saw your name on the list of guests. I thought I'd better talk to you."

"If you knew I was going to be here, you shouldn't have come."

"I had to come."

"You'll have to leave, then. I'll drive down to Cannes and telephone you so you can say you've been called away unexpectedly. It will take me about half an hour. You can make up your own story for Mrs. Sanford."

"I'm not going to leave, Paul. You have to trust me. . . ."

Paul's calm broke. He said furiously, "Do you think I could stand by and let you rob my friends? Even a thief ought to have a sense of decency. Make an excuse and go, or I'll give you away. I swear it."

"You'll send me back to 20 years in prison if you do."

"I'm giving you a choice. For God's sake, John!" It was like a groan. "You don't give me any at all."

He tried to shove by. John said, "Wait!" and put out his foot to block the door. Without hesitation, Paul hit him.

The blow, which landed solidly on John's unprotected chin, knocked him across the room. He did not lose consciousness until he brought up against the wall, but then the strength drained suddenly out of his legs. He felt himself falling.

When his eyes focused again, he did not know how long he had been sitting on the floor. He got up, closed the door and locked it, then went to the window.

He saw Paul come out, get into his car and roar away. Another car coming up the hill, a dusty Citroën with a buggy-whip radio aerial mounted on one rear fender, had to risk the extreme edge of the road to avoid a collision. The Citroën continued up the hill

and pulled into the parking space Paul had just left. A man got out. Although the sunlight was nearly gone, John recognized Oriol's stocky figure immediately. He thought the second man who got out of the Citroën was Lepic, but he could not be certain. He watched the two men come toward the château, saw George Sanford leave a group of his guests on the *terrasse* and go to meet them. A servant went to the car and came back carrying a pair of suitcases. The whole group moved together toward the west wing.

He had his door open a crack when they came by his room.

"... don't like it," George Sanford was grumbling. "I appreciate your position, Commissioner, but I'm still not happy about it. Now that you've disposed of this cat burglar, I don't see why we can't relax and forget about jewel thieves. I have to tell you that Mrs. Sanford has been against the whole thing from the start."

Another voice said smoothly, "The elimination of one criminal does not mean there are no others, Mr. Sanford. The very fact that we have finished with one thief will invite others to expect us to be lax. That is why I have asked for secrecy. I assure you . . ."

The voices faded. John closed the door and turned the key. His main feeling was one of relief that all his problems were now one, simple and elementary. Mr. Burns and Mr. Burns' troubles were finished.

He took off the body harness and the padded shoes and packed them away in his bag with the blueprints. The eyebrows would have to be soaked off with hot water. He did not have time for that, and they were not important. He put on a gray slipover and gray flannels, the glove-leather slippers, and buttoned his passport and his money in his hip pocket. Mr. Burns' passport was worse than useless to him now, but he kept it. It was a tie to something he had hoped to have.

The room was growing dark. All but a few minutes of Paul's promised half hour had passed when someone came along the

hall and rapped lightly on the door panel. He thought it was the call to take Paul's telephone message, but Francie's voice said, "John."

He let her in. In the semidarkness she saw the profile of his body.

"John, what have you done to yourself?"

"Tossed Mr. Burns overboard. He can't make another appearance."

He told her about Paul, and of Lepic's arrival with Oriol. He said, "I have a few minutes before Paul telephones. He'll give me away if I don't leave, Oriol will identify me if I stay, and Lepic is bound to be curious about anyone who disappears without an explanation. He'll investigate when Mr. Burns can't be found to answer an urgent telephone call, so be ready for questions. Let your mother do most of the talking. She won't have to put on an act."

"What are you going to do?"

He put his hand on her arm to silence her. Footsteps were coming down the hall again. There was a knock, another, a call, "*Téléphone, m'sieu*," another, louder knock. He answered and in a moment the footsteps went away.

"That's it," he said. "It will be a few minutes before they begin hunting for me. Better not let them find you near my room."

"What are you going to do?"

He said, "Tell me the schedule for the week-end. Just the hours after dark."

Whatever else he might think about Francie, he was grateful for her quick intelligence. She said, "Tonight, only music and dancing on the terrace. Everyone is too tired from traveling to stay up late. Tomorrow night, the *gala*; costumes and a pageant. Nothing special has been planned for Sunday night. Almost all of the guests are leaving Monday. What . . ."

"Tomorrow they'll be up all night, and the jewelry will be on display, so that's out." He was thinking out loud. "Tonight or

Sunday. I'd do it tonight. They'll sleep better." He reached for her hand. "Come over here and point out the Princess' room."

Her hand felt cold and she was shivering. "I'm sure that's the Princess' window, just under that gable. What are you going to do? Please tell me."

"I'm going up on the tower to wait." It was wholly dark in the room now. He could not see her face. "If he gets by Oriol and Lepic, I'll be watching for him. If he doesn't come tonight, I should be able to last until Sunday, unless they tear the place down to find me. If he doesn't come Sunday, I'll try to get to Italy before I'm picked up."

She said nothing. Her shivering increased.

He said, "Will you do one thing more for me?"

He thought she nodded. "Tell them I — Mr. Burns — told you I had to leave unexpectedly and had no time to say good-bye. It will keep Paul from talking, and it ought to make them look for me somewhere else. If I get away with this, I'll owe you more thanks than I have time to give you. If not, I'm still grateful for what you've done. Good-bye."

He left her standing by the window. He took Mr. Burns' bag across the hall and hid it under Paul's bed, where it might escape detection for a while, then went quickly and quietly to the window.

He had to squeeze to get to the ledge outside. He was on the opposite side of the wing from the *terrasse*. There were no lights in the garden below him. Stretching to his full height, he reached above his head and explored the old wall with his fingers until he found a crevice between the stones. He began to climb, a gray shadow against gray rock.

CHAPTER 7

MR. SANFORD was standing with Lepic and Oriol on the lawn where they could see the rise of the castle walls, explaining why any suggestion of thieves breaking into the Combe d'Or was nonsense. It was his firm opinion that once the castle doors had been closed and bolted for the night, nobody alive could enter his home except by dynamiting a way and not easily even then. The valet coughed at his elbow.

"Yes, yes, what is it?" he said.

"Mr. Burns, sir. He's wanted on the telephone. An urgent call."

"Burns?" Sanford said blankly. "Who the devil is Mr. Burns?"

"The friend of Mrs. Stevens and her daughter, sir."

"Oh, him. I didn't even know he was here. Ask Mrs. Sanford."

"I've already asked her, sir. She told me to speak to you."

George Sanford went reluctantly to search for his guest. Lepic accompanied him. When they found Mr. Burns' room empty and his luggage gone, he could not satisfy Lepic's curiosity. He had met Mr. Burns only once, casually. Mrs. Sanford had invited him to the *gala* at the request of Mrs. Stevens, or possibly Miss Stevens.

Mrs. Stevens was startled to find Lepic suddenly at her elbow, asking questions about Mr. Burns in a demanding way and with more signs of excitement than he had shown at the loss of her jewelry. She said, "He's a gentleman staying at my hotel, a friend of my daughter's."

Francie was no more helpful. She was lying in the dark in her room. She had a splitting headache, and did not want to talk with anyone. But she told Lepic of the message Mr. Burns had left for his hosts, that he had been called away unexpectedly without time to make his apologies. She did not know when or how he had left the château. She answered Lepic's questions listlessly.

Later Lepic took Oriol aside and said, "I think we've got him! Paul du Pré is missing, too. So is his car. The servants say he

drove off in a hurry just about the time we arrived. Didn't you tell me he and Robie were close friends?"

"They used to be but I don't think Paul would help him beat the law. Besides, the description is all wrong. John had more hair and less belly, and it isn't his technique to smuggle in as a guest."

"Hairlines and bellies are easy to change," Lepic said impatiently. "So are techniques, if you can't get in any other way. I tell you, we've got him!"

"We've got somebody," Oriol conceded. "But I'm not convinced that it was John Robie."

"Who else would have a reason to run?"

"Any crook could recognize the Citroën and know we weren't making a social call." Oriol laughed without enjoyment. "You can go out and set your nets, *commissaire divisionnaire*. It won't be any worse than a waste of time. I'm going to stay here."

Lepic's face flushed. He turned on his heel and hurried away, across the lawn and through the gardens of the moat to the car park beyond. The Citroën roared off in a spray of gravel.

From his remote perch behind the crenelated tower top, John saw Lepic's departure. Paul returned only a few minutes later, while the *commissaire* was still on his way to put the *brigade mobile* in action. Oriol went to meet him, and the pantomime was clear. Oriol asked his question. Paul shook his head. Oriol asked other questions. Paul continued to shake his head. He knew nothing about Mr. Burns, and had an explanation for his own absence from the château.

Several hours later, John heard Oriol exploring the roof. Dinner was over, coffee and liqueurs had been served, and several couples were dancing to the music of a small orchestra that played on the terrace. Oriol intended to see for himself if Sanford's claims about the castle's impregnability were justified. He still did not believe that Le Chat would come to the Combe d'Or by invitation.

Working his way up through the château from the bottom

floors, peering through windows and trying doors, he smiled wryly to himself at Sanford's boasts. The château might be successfully defended against armed assault, as Sanford claimed. But with its drainpipes, and ladders of ivy, it offered no protection against the entry of a man like John Robie.

John heard him first when the door at the base of the tower squeaked open on heavy hinges. Expecting that he might climb the stairs inside the tower to the trap door at the top, John cautiously dropped over the tower parapet to burrow into the screen of vine ten feet below. He hung there for a quarter of an hour, breathing through his mouth so the dust in the ivy leaves would not make him sneeze. But Oriol did not try the trap at the tower top. When John was certain that it was safe to move, he went back to his high perch. He was not disturbed again, and sat watching the dancing far below.

The orchestra stopped playing early, before midnight. By ones and twos the guests drifted away from the terrace until only Paul and the orchestra remained, finally only Paul.

He sat alone, smoking one cigarette after another, not moving until George Sanford came back to the terrace and spoke to him. Sanford's gestures said that he did not like to disturb his guest's solitude, but it was time to lock up. Paul followed him inside. The huge double doors of the castle swung shut. Bars dropped into place. Moments afterward the lights in the emerald pool winked out, then those on the terrace. The Château Combe d'Or was sealed for the night.

There was no need to maintain a watch until the many lights of the castle windows went out. But John had a view of more than the rooftops.

For what it had been originally, a lookout point, the tower top was magnificent. There was no moon, and the brilliance of the lights marking the curving coast road along the Mediterranean was sharper in contrast with the velvet darkness of the night. Against the shadowy backdrop of the Estérel hills a necklace of

light marked the grand sweep of seashore north and east from Théoule toward La Napoule and the blaze of illumination that was Cannes continuing beyond to the clustered sparkle of Cap Ferrat. Beyond Cap Ferrat another, dimmer necklace marked the beginning of the Corniche road which led along the cliffs to Monte Carlo, Menton and the Italian border, 60 miles away. The whole Côte d'Azur lay under his eyes.

Sixty miles of jewels, he thought, and the hope that had carried him failed utterly. With a thousand opportunities at hand, it was beyond reason to expect the thief to come to the Combe d'Or.

But the thief had to come.

He did not doubt that he could last until Sunday night if it became necessary. He would have to remain on the tower top during the following day and most of the next night, but it would not be impossible to leave the château during the height of the *gala* and return before dawn. There were farms in the hills back of the Combe d'Or where he could find food and water. Lepic would have his net laid by morning, but it would cover roads and borders, not the near countryside. Oriol was the man he had most to fear.

The thought of Oriol made him turn from the lights of the coast line to watch the rooftops again.

Windows were darkening, one by one. As time passed, he could mark the tide of sleep rising in the castle by the way in which darkness came first to the lower floors, then to the master bedrooms and guest rooms, last of all to the dormer windows in the roof where the servants slept. When the bell rang to mark the passage of another half hour, there was only starlight to show him the faint sheen of the gray slate roofs.

The church bell pealed 2:30. The Combe d'Or slept, dark and soundless. The air had begun to cool perceptibly. A breeze rustled the ivy.

He changed his cramped position without taking his eyes from the roof. The ivy rustled again. This time there was no breeze in

his face. He thought, quite calmly, Careful. Don't make any mistakes now. Let him come.

The ivy whispered and whispered again. He felt his pulses beat with the intermittent movements of the climber on the vine. He began to breathe deeply through his open mouth, steadying himself for the effort to come. He bent to test the ties of his slippers, rubbed his palms on the rock of the parapet to dry them and roughen the skin, tightened his belt, flexed his fingers. The ivy whispered more loudly now; rustle, pause, rustle again, finally a pause that was not followed by another rustle. Only then did he risk exposing the outline of his head and shoulders against the sky. He looked down from the parapet and saw the shadowy figure below make its way unhesitatingly, surely, confidently, out on the sharp peak of the rooftop.

There was no need to wait longer, nothing left to plan. The time had come. He swung down the ivy in a surge of released tension.

The shadow was visible several yards ahead when he followed it. He had not been able to conceal the sounds of his descent from the tower top. He knew he had been seen, as much as anything could be seen in the starlit darkness. There was no identity to the shadow ahead except a dim grayness. He saw it only for a moment before it faded into blackness.

The disappearance did not worry him. The thief might dodge him for a while in the angles of the roof gables and turrets, but he was between the shadow and the ladder of ivy. To escape, the thief would have to leave the roof and make his way to the ground by some other means. He could not begin a descent without appearing on the eaves or attempting to work back toward the tower. John stood in his way.

It became a three-dimensional chess game, each move according to prescribed rules, following definite lines. Short cuts were impossible. A misstep on the slates would have sent either of them sliding helplessly, with only the gutters at the eaves to stop a fall.

They could pass along the roof peaks, diagonally in the angle of joining gables, up and down the slope of roof corners, or by way of the gutters. John did not move as rapidly as the thief. He was at a disadvantage in that he had to explore each shadow, study each pocket of darkness when he came to it so that he might not overrun his quarry, opening an escape to the tower behind. He meant to force the shadow down to the roof of the west wing, where there were no corners to hide in, no rising gables or descending angles to dodge across, nothing but a single roof peak, a straight line ending in sheer fall to the moat and the end of the chessboard.

He almost missed the shadow lying flat and motionless at the outer end of a dormer he was about to pass. John moved out on the dormer peak, cautiously. He expected the thief to risk a swing down to the eave below and from there along the gutter or down the wall to the courtyard. He was not prepared for the soaring jump the thief made instead to an adjoining dormer.

It was a tremendous leap, one he would have hesitated to attempt himself. His own muscles tensed in an unconscious effort to assist the jumper. The thief failed to reach secure footing, came down heavily on the slates, slipped, and saved himself by catching at the peak of the dormer. Tiles split, slid and went clattering off the eave into the courtyard, to shatter on the terrace.

ORIOLE heard them fall. When the château had quieted down for the night, he had taken his post at a window in the east wing from which he could watch the windows of the Princess Lila's bedroom and Mimi Sanford's bedroom. When the slates fell, the chance of his position let him see the light that came on immediately in one of the roof dormers. He marked the position of the dormer and hurried up the stairs.

An angry man in a nightshirt answered his knock when he found the room he wanted. He was one of the cooks, who had to be up at five o'clock and needed his rest.

"How do I know what happened?" he grumbled. "*Mon Dieu*, what a household! As many guests to cook for as there are worms in the potatoes, no sleep . . ."

"What woke you?"

"A thump, dirt in my face, stars peeking at me through a hole in the roof. Right over the sack full of soup bones they give me for a bed, too. What do I do when it rains, eh? It's a situation calling for thought when a student of Escoffier and a citizen of the French Republic . . ."

He shrugged and went back to bed, muttering. Oriol was already running down the hall. His wind was gone when he climbed the last flight and unbarred the door at the base of the tower. He stopped to breathe on the narrow rampart, peering off across the rooftops.

The light in the dormer had gone out. He could see nothing except the beginning of a sharp roof peak leading off into darkness, but he knew how far the fall was on either side. He did not have a head for heights. But while he hesitated, still breathing hard, he heard slates slide and clatter again.

He had no light, no time to hunt for a light, and no stomach for rooftops in the dark, nothing to drive him but stubbornness and a mistake he meant to redeem. He set his jaw, lowered himself from the rampart until he was astride the roof peak, and began to inch forward into the darkness.

JOHN had dislodged the second fall of slates. He was being driven to take increasing risks to keep the fleeing shadow ahead of him. The thief had seen his intention and was making every effort to escape the trap. He had not yet attempted going over the eaves, but there would be nothing else left for him once they were on the roof of the wing. Nimbleness of foot would not help him then. Only sureness of grip and strength of arms and shoulders counted on the wall. Still forcing toward that end, John lost sight of the shadow again.

He stopped, searching for it along the eaves, unwilling to move farther until he saw that he was not opening another way of escape. When he heard the scrape on the roof far behind him, he thought for a black moment that the escape had already been made. But immediately he caught sight of the shadow again, almost to the drop-off that would take it down to the wing, and knew that someone else was on the roof.

Oriol moved by hitching himself along the ridge peaks with his hands. He came like a turtle, with a turtle's steadiness of purpose. He could not keep his heels from scraping the slates, but he was not trying to be quiet. He knew Le Chat was ahead of him. He wanted Le Chat to know that he was coming.

He called into the darkness: "John!"

John recognized the voice, but even before Oriol called his name he had guessed who it was. As surely as Oriol knew that the noise on the rooftop meant Le Chat was there, so John knew that only one man had the dogged determination to hunt him there in the dark on his own ground. Oriol's voice came clearly across the rooftop:

"Lepic has the net out for you. If you get away from me, you'll never escape him. Give yourself up."

There was silence. Then the patient scraping noise began again.

John moved ahead of it. The shadow was now at the extreme end of the roof, on the eave. There was no way to go from there except down the wing.

Because John was moving along the roof peak and had his back turned, he did not see the flash of the shot when Oriol worked a pistol out of his pocket and fired it into the air. The bright red pencil of flame went straight up. Oriol meant to arouse the household, not kill another thief. All John saw with the echoing report of the shot was his own shadow outlined for an instant on the tiles. The flare that showed him to Oriol let him see that the other shadow was gone. Expecting the roar of another shot and the shock of the bullet in his back, he raced along the peak, down

the slope of the last roof corner. He was over the eave before the gun banged again. He swung from the gutter and dropped, not expecting to land on the safe perch of the roof peak below but prepared to fall flat to either side, according to the angle of the slate roof his feet met.

He did not fall. Hands reached out to steady him. He turned to seize and hold the figure beside him, and knew in the immediate moment of contact, unmistakably, that he had caught a woman.

Tight in the grip of his arms, not struggling, she whispered, "Let me go, John Robie. We have to help each other now."

"Danielle!"

Before he could even attempt to think, bring his mind to accept the stunning fact of the discovery, she said quickly, "There's the first light now. He'll be able to see us as soon as he reaches the eave. We have to get off the roof. I've got a rope."

She crouched on the peak where they stood. Another light came on somewhere above them. He heard the scrape of Oriol's approach on the roof above.

It released him from the momentary paralysis of thought. He took Danielle's arm and brought her erect beside him.

"There's no time to fix a rope," he said. "We'll have to go over the eave. I'll make a bridge for you. The wall isn't difficult."

The thought did not enter his head that he might get away more easily alone, or that he should try. Afterward he could not remember any conscious change of attitude in himself, from pursuer of a thief to the thief's ally. It seemed wholly natural to find himself providing a path of escape for the girl he had risked his liberty to give to the police. Now Oriol threatened them both.

He swung down from the eave at what he judged was the point he had come up. It took him a moment to find the handhold and toe hold he knew to be there. He was firmly braced between wall and eave when he felt Danielle's light touch on his fingers clinging to the gutter. He lifted one finger against her palm as a signal.

She came down from the eave and across his body to the wall like a squirrel, found a grip, held her own weight. He swung in behind her.

An angry voice shouted from a window. More lights were coming on. They heard Oriol call back, urgently, the angry voice replying, other voices.

He said, "Are you all right?"

"Yes." Danielle was flat against the wall by his side. "Shall I go first?"

"We don't have time to make it to the ground before they head us off. The first window is about 20 feet straight down, two yards to your left."



As if in response to a cue, the slit window below them lighted. Danielle said, "Someone is awake in the room."

"The whole place will be awake in a minute. It's Paul's room. He's our only hope."

A second window on the same floor with Paul's room showed a light, then another a floor below. Oriol was shouting urgently from the rooftop. They began to descend.

The room was empty when they squeezed in through the narrow slit window. Paul was outside, in the corridor. They heard his voice, and the voices of other guests aroused by the shots and the shouting. But no one passed the open doorway to see them before they had crossed the room, so when Paul, in pajamas and a dressing gown, came in, he found them there behind it.

The color drained slowly from his face as he looked at them. Danielle was dressed, like John, in gray slacks and jersey and soft leather slippers. She wore a dark beret which hid her bright hair, and a length of strong light line was wound around her slim waist like a belt. Even without the dust of the roof staining her clothes and John's to show where they had been and the way they had come, their clothing alone would have betrayed them for what they were, two thieves.

Paul closed the door, turned the key, then switched off the light.

"It's safer for you in the dark," he said, "and I'd rather not have to see you, if you don't mind."

They heard him sit on the bed. When he spoke again, minutes later, it was in the same lifeless tone. He said, "It would have been less cruel to tell me the truth when I asked you to, John."

John had his ear to the door, listening. He was too fully occupied to realize that Paul had come to a natural conclusion until Danielle said pleadingly, "Whatever else you think . . ."

John listened at the door. There were voices, but none nearby. They could talk in safety.

He told Paul all he could as briefly as possible, stopping now and then to listen at the door panel. At the end, he said, "I never

lied to you, Paul. I didn't know anything more about Danielle than I said. I don't know any more about her now, except that she's what you thought I was."

Paul said, "Is it true, Danielle?"

"Yes." Her answer was barely audible.

They heard footsteps coming along the corridor, and two voices arguing. The low-voiced argument continued outside the door for a moment before someone knocked.

Paul said, "Who is it?"

"Oriol. I want to talk to you, Paul."

Paul turned on the light. Nothing in his expression told them what he meant to do. John reached for Danielle's arm to bring her against the wall, where they would be shielded by the door when it opened. It was as instinctive as everything else he had done since learning her identity.

Oriol and George Sanford were in the hall. Sanford looked angry, Oriol stubborn. He said to Paul, "John Robie was on the roof tonight. I almost got him. He didn't have time to get away from this wing, and I think he would come to you for help if he was trapped. Do you know where he is?"

John held his breath. Danielle was tense at his side.

Paul said, "John Robie would never risk coming to me if the police wanted him. Do you want to search my room?"

"No," said Oriol. "I know you don't lie, Paul. But you held something back from me last night when I asked you about Burns. I don't know what it was, but from now on I want the whole truth. I tell you plainly that John Robie is still hiding in the castle, and that he cannot possibly escape. He may try to come to you. If you seek to protect him in any way, your own arrest—"

"I won't permit such threats to my guest," Sanford broke in furiously.

Oriol ignored him. "For the present that is enough," he said coldly. "I'm sorry I disturbed you."

Paul stared at the door panel in front of his eyes until the foot-

steps went away. Then he shook his head quickly and turned to John and Danielle.

He managed a strange smile. He said, "That puts us all on the same side, doesn't it? Two thieves and a liar. What do we do next?"

John let out his breath. Paul said, "I've heard John's part of the story now." He turned to Danielle. She bent her head to avoid Paul's eyes. John said, "Paul is entitled to know, as much as I am. We've both paid a high price to protect you, in our own ways."

She bit her lip. Afterward she gave no sign of emotion. She spoke calmly, always to John. Paul never took his eyes from her face.

Her story was much like John's own. The only difference between them was that she had been trained first for the ballet, as a child. Her parents had been wealthy enough to provide her with the long schooling they hoped would produce a star. It had been an apprenticeship to which she submitted without enthusiasm until she was 13, when a side wash of the war and a flight of bombers wiped out her family, leaving bare survival a problem for an adolescent girl in a devastated country occupied by an invading army.

"I had relatives in Switzerland," she said. "They brought me out of France, but they were poor, and practical. I had to support myself. The nearest thing they knew to the theater was a Swiss circus that came around the countryside once a year. I went with it."

It had been another kind of apprenticeship, more arduous than ballet. But her trained muscles and agility helped her. In time she learned acrobatics and the trapeze. From trapeze flying she graduated to the high wire, first as part of an act, ultimately to star billing as Monsieur Daniel, the Aerial Clown, with a mustache and baggy clothes to conceal her sex.

Although she still did not look at Paul, some change in her tone made both men realize she was talking to him now, not

John. "I don't know when it was I decided to do what I did, if I ever made a decision. I don't think I had to. I wanted things: security, and leisure, and a nice life, not to be a performing monkey on a string three times a day. Another girl might have got away from it by finding different work. I didn't. I can't tell you why the idea of stealing didn't make me ashamed. I suppose people have different ideas of . . ."

Paul said, "You don't have to explain anything to me, and John must understand. Go on with the rest of it."

"At first I thought I could use Monsieur Daniel to hide behind. I did, in Switzerland. But there was nothing big to steal there, and I didn't intend to be a thief any longer than necessary to get what I wanted, so I left the circus and came here. I had a new idea when I met Claude. I thought I could use him instead of playing the role of Monsieur Daniel, but Claude wasn't clever enough to trust. When I heard about Le Chat, it was exactly what I wanted; a real thief, known, photographed and identified. I read everything I could find about you and copied you in everything."

John said, "It would have been better for both of us if you had remained Monsieur Daniel. When did you identify me?"

"Not until tonight on the roof. Oriol called your name. Of course, I knew from the beginning that Mr. Burns didn't go to the casinos just to gamble 100-franc counters. I thought you were probably an insurance detective, like Mr. Paige."

"I suspected you, for a while," John said. "But I thought Claude was your climber. I forgot that women don't develop the same kind of muscles. And you never let me touch you."

"I never let anyone touch me. It was too dangerous."

Paul said curiously, "Why?"

John took Paul's hand and put it on Danielle's shoulder, at the point where the muscle from the shoulder blade ran up into the neck. Under the softness of her flesh it was like a hard rope.

Paul said, "I see."

He left his hand on her shoulder. Danielle did not move away from the contact.

She said to John, "What else do you want to know?"

"Why did you come here when you knew I'd be here?"

"I told you I didn't know who you were. I wasn't afraid of Mr. Burns. Kind, innocent Mr. Burns, who introduced me to his . . . good friend Paul . . ."

Her steady voice wavered and broke.

Paul's hand was still on her shoulder. He made her turn to look at him.

". . . his good friend Paul, who had fallen in love with you and couldn't change if you had robbed the French treasury and burned it to the ground afterward," he finished. "This isn't the way I intended to ask you, but it will do. Will you marry me?"

She tried to say something, could not, and shook her head. He said, "I meant to ask you when I invited you here. All the things you wanted I can give you, if you'll have me, Danielle. I offered to buy John off when I thought he was the thief. Let me buy you."

She still could not answer him, only shake her head. The eagerness that had been in his face left it. He took his hand from her shoulder.

John said, "What else do you expect her to say, Paul? Give her a chance. You can't buy her out of trouble. She has to do that herself. Do you still have the jewelry, Danielle?"

She nodded.

"All of it? Unbroken?"

"Yes." She swallowed, and found it easier to talk. "I was going to take it to Holland and sell it there, after I got the pearls."

"You'll have to give it up. You can have Paul instead, if you want him, but they'll never stop hunting us until the jewelry is returned. If we turn it back — let me think for a minute. I've got an idea."

It did not come to him all at once that there was a way they

could both go freely from the château. He only knew certainly that to end the search for the thief a return of the stolen jewels was essential. But he had had an idea for his own escape since Danielle said she thought Mr. Burns and Mr. Paige were working toward the same end. Mr. Paige had the influence and power of the London insurance company behind him. If that influence could be brought to their side, purchased with the free return of 125 million francs' worth of jewelry . . . Paige was hardheaded . . . the recovery was what he wanted, not a conviction.

His mind raced over the possibilities. He could see his own way out. Francie would have to help again, with Danielle, if she was still on his side.

He looked at the window and saw that the sky was already light. "We'll have to wait until seven, at least. I've thought of a way to send you and Danielle out of here together. Never mind how. I'll tell you when I'm sure it will work. Where is the jewelry now, Danielle?"

"In my room. In a suitcase."

"That's what you'll pay to stay out of Lepic's hands then. As soon as you're safe, get the suitcase and take it to Bellini with a note I'll give you. After that, you and Paul are on your own. You can decide for yourselves where you want to go from there. Give me a pencil and paper, Paul."

He sat down and wrote the note to Bellini.

HE WROTE a second note which Paul carried to Francie's room shortly after six o'clock. The sun was up, and the heat of another blazing day had begun to make itself felt. It was a good beginning. Bad weather would have made his scheme more difficult.

Paul returned in a few minutes. John said, "Did she ask any questions?"

"She read the note and said it would take her about half an hour. That's all. She didn't seem surprised."

"Good. Where is Oriol?"

"He's trying to reach Lepic by phone."

"You'll have to get away before Lepic comes, because he knows Francie by sight. Put on a pair of bathing trunks and a robe. The minute Francie gets here, you go. Start your car, and give Oriol plenty of time to notice that you're leaving. If he comes after you to ask why, tell him the seashore is the only place you can think of where you might escape insults from the police. Be unpleasant enough to show you haven't forgotten this morning. When Danielle gets down to the car, let him see her, but leave as quickly as you can without acting as if you were in a hurry."

"I know how to do my part. What about you?"

"I'll go a different way. I wouldn't be trying this if I weren't certain I could get out myself, so don't worry about me. There's nothing to do now but wait."

Paul changed in the bathroom and then they waited. The valet came by with a *petit déjeuner* of coffee and rolls. Paul took the tray at the door and they shared the breakfast, drinking from a single cup.

Danielle spoke hardly at all. She realized that what happened during the next few hours meant either an end or a beginning for her.

Francie arrived before they had finished the coffee. She wore her bathing suit with a beach robe over it. There were dark circles under her eyes. Nothing in her attitude indicated either reluctance or eagerness to play the part he had given her. She looked only once at Danielle, briefly, and asked no questions.

Paul left the room immediately. Francie said, "There are a few people on the terrace, but none near the pool. I put my toe in the water, then walked away. No one paid any attention. They're still talking about burglars."

John said to Danielle, "Roll up your slacks and put on the sandals."

Francie took off the sandals and gave them to Danielle, who put them on, then the beach robe, finally the bathing cap. With a towel tied like a scarf at her neck, she was effectively disguised. There was only a small difference in height to show that she was not the girl who had already appeared on the terrace to dip her toe in the swimming pool.

John said, "The rest is up to you and Paul. Cross the terrace when you get downstairs, go on by the pool, and get into Paul's car. Let Oriol look at you if he's there. He'll lose interest as soon as he sees you're a woman. Don't try to hide your face, and don't hurry."

"I understand."

"That's all, then. Get the jewelry and the note to Bellini as quickly as possible."

"You're putting a lot of faith in me, aren't you?" Danielle said.

"If you mean because you might not deliver the jewelry, I don't think so. You can't have it and Paul, too. You'd rather have him, wouldn't you?"

"Yes."

"Make him a good wife, Danielle. He deserves it."

After Danielle had gone, John went to the window. He watched the circling road that descended from the hilltop, counting minutes. He feared most of all the bad luck of Lepic's arrival before they got away. If the Citroën came up the hill before Paul's car went down . . .

Francie said, "How are you going to get away yourself?"

"Bellini will buy me out with the jewelry."

"You're sure?"

"I'm sure; 125 million francs is worth more than I am."

"It would have been easier for you to give her to the police, as you planned."

"I had to change my plans, Francie. I didn't know she was the thief."

"It makes a difference that it was Danielle?"

There was still no sign of a car coming in either direction. He said, "It makes a difference that Paul is in love with her. But right now I'm not sure I could have turned anyone over to the police. Hunting a thief is one thing. Sending him to prison is something else. I know what prison is like."

"If Bellini can't do what you expect him to do, you'll go back. You know that, too, don't you?"

"I know Bellini's capabilities."

"I'm glad you have faith in him. Is there anything more you want from me?"

"No. The rest of it is up to Bellini."

He heard the motor first, then saw the car, Paul's car, going down the road. It passed quickly out of his sight, but he watched the road for another full minute for signs of pursuit before he turned away from the window.

"They made it," he said. "Now . . ."

Francie had gone.

It surprised him only because he had not heard her go. Because he knew the chambermaid would come by soon to make up the room, he got his suitcase out from under Paul's bed, made sure no one was in the corridor, and took the bag across the hall to his own room, which the maid would not need to visit. There he brought Mr. Burns back to life for his final appearance, put on the padded shoes and harness, touched the roots of his hair with dye for the last time. He was careful not to pass in front of the windows, but he watched the terrace and saw Francie leave the château an hour later.

Francie was showing good judgment. Her mother's innocence would be obvious to anyone who questioned her, but she herself could not safely remain to explain, if it occurred to anyone to ask who it was that had left the château wearing her beach robe and sandals. He felt better to know that she was gone, free from possible trouble.

He waited for Bellini to bring Mr. Paige. There was never any doubt in his mind about Bellini.

Lepic arrived at the château first. He, Oriol and George Sanford were talking on the terrace, Oriol pointing to the rooftops, then to the wing, Sanford shaking his head in disagreement at something Oriol said, when Bellini's heavy old Hispano-Suiza came purring up the hill. Bellini and Mr. Paige got out and came side by side across the lawn toward the three men on the terrace. Even from his window, John could see the beaming, happy smile on Bellini's round face.

BELLINI remained unobtrusively in the background. He had coached Mr. Paige carefully along the general lines of what was to be said, but the phrasing was Mr. Paige's.

He introduced himself to George Sanford. "Paige," he said crisply. "I represent the London insurance company. This gentleman is Mr. Bellini. Good morning, Commissioner."

George Sanford said wearily, "This is all utter nonsense, Mr. Paige. I don't know what you may have heard, but I assure you there has been no theft of any kind. You're all making a fuss about nothing at all. If I sound rude, I'm sorry, but you're also causing me and my guests a great deal of embarrassment."

Lepic said, "If there wasn't a theft, it's only because Oriol was here to prevent it. He saw a man on the roof. And if you can see the hole where he fell, as he says, there's no argument."

"A hole on the roof?" Mr. Paige twirled his mustache tip. "I'm afraid my principals will have to assume responsibility for the repairs, then, if for nothing else. I rather fancy it was my own man who caused the damage."

Lepic said, "Your *what*?"

Mr. Paige twirled the other mustache tip. "My operative," he said. He was enjoying himself. He had not forgotten Lepic's cold treatment of him at the commissariat. "Mr. Burns."

Lepic's face went suddenly gray. George Sanford's chin dropped.

Oriol, who could not follow the conversation in English, said to Lepic, "What is it?"

Lepic paid no attention.

"Where is he?" Mr. Paige asked pleasantly.

Sanford said, "Why, I don't know. He disappeared last night. We thought — I'm afraid I still don't understand, Mr. Paige. You say he was your operative?"

"An operative of my company, to be exact." Mr. Paige twirled both mustache points simultaneously. "He has been working with me, and Mr. Bellini" — Bellini bowed, beaming — "for some time to effect a recovery of the jewelry stolen here on the Côte during the past months. Until this morning, I confess we were not wholly convinced that Commissioner Lepic had disposed of the thief, and for that reason I thought it wise to put my own man here to protect our interests and those of your guests who are our clients, particularly Mrs. Sanford and the Princess Lila." Mr. Paige coughed gently. "Had I known that Commissioner Lepic intended to take the same steps himself, my own precautions would not have been required, and the imposition on your hospitality unnecessary, Mr. Sanford. I seem to have misjudged Mr. Lepic in more ways than one."

Lepic's face was like a dead man's. Mr. Paige went on, "Your action in shooting the thief was not as unfortunate as I believed it to be at the time, Commissioner. His death permitted his friends, who held the stolen jewelry for him, to take advantage of one of my *récompense proportionnelle* advertisements of which you were so doubtful. The reward was claimed this morning." He paused long enough to make the effect he wanted. "The stolen jewelry has been recovered. I have already given the news to the papers."

Oriol said in Lepic's ear, "What's going on? What's he saying?"

"The jewelry came back!"

Oriol was as stunned as Lepic had been. But Lepic, with a

few seconds to react, sensed that a game was being played on him. He said flatly, "I don't believe it."

"I assure you that I have inspected it myself and found everything in order, including some pieces not insured by my company. Of course, I have had no way to verify those against inventory, but I have every reason to trust the good faith of the man who surrendered the jewels to me."

"Who?"

"One of the guarantees explicitly offered in the advertisements, as you will remember, Commissioner . . ."

"Who was it?" Lepic said fiercely.

". . . is that no questions would be asked," Mr. Paige finished. "The reward has been paid, the jewels will be returned to their owners by me, and you yourself have ended the thief's potentialities for crime, Commissioner. There seems to be no need now for anything else except to offer apologies for the small deception it was necessary to play on Mr. Sanford and to ask Mr. Burns — ah, here he comes now. Good morning, Burns."

"Good morning, Mr. Paige," John came across the terrace on cue. "Good morning, Mr. Bellini."

"I'm delighted to see you again, Mr. Burns," Bellini said, chuckling. "Delighted."

JOHN did not feel safe until he and Bellini were in the car, on their way down the curving hill road. The strain of the few minutes on the terrace had been enormous. He had not dared to meet Oriol's eyes. He knew that Oriol had recognized him at once, but Oriol's mind worked slowly. The return of the stolen jewelry destroyed the whole foundation for his belief in John's guilt, and without it he did not know what to believe. He retreated to the only safe ground he knew, silence.

Lepic was certain of only two things; that Mr. Burns was not what Mr. Paige said he was, and that he could not jeopardize his career by challenging Mr. Paige until he knew more. His uncer-

tainty kept him baffled during the time it took John to apologize to his dazed host for his deception and leave with Bellini. Mr. Paige remained to act as rear guard and invent explanations as required.

"Lepic gave him several uncomfortable moments," Bellini said. "He's getting his own back." He wheezed and giggled. "Did you see Lepic's expression when you came across the terrace?"

"I was watching Oriol," John said. "He was the only one who really worried me. He's a bulldog."

"Bulldogs are not a breed to take action without being sure of themselves. Lepic is more of a danger to you, still."

"I don't see how he can be. He's committed himself to the point where keeping his mouth shut, and accepting the credit is the only alternative to exposing his own mistakes. Oriol can still send me away any time he wants to. He'll have to know the truth before I can go back to the Villa des Bijoux."

"Telling the *flics* the truth is always a mistake. However, Oriol is also a *maquisard*. It can be arranged for him to learn a small part of it, enough to restore your position with him." Bellini wagged his head, tittering. "Not everything, of course. It is hardly believable. Who would have suspected that our lovely Danielle was so clever?"

BEFORE Bellini let him off at the hotel, he repeated something he had told John before.

"Yours is not a subtle mind, John. It functions well enough, but the line is single-tracked. You have been preoccupied for a long time by something to which you had necessarily to devote yourself. Now you have time to think of more than the survival of yourself and your friends. Consider this question: Do you really want to go back to your old life at the Villa des Bijoux?"

"I don't have to consider it. I know."

"Think about it just the same, and let me hear your final answer later. In the meantime, give my regards to Miss Stevens."

John puzzled over the question while he was crossing the lobby, in the elevator, and as he walked down the corridor to Francie's room. He could not decide exactly what Bellini meant by it. The implication seemed to be that he might find life at the Villa des Bijoux drab after his spell of activity as Mr. Burns; that having once returned to thievery, or pseudothievery, he would not be able to go back again to the garden and the dog and the books. But that was nonsense. Thieving had never been more than a business to him, a means to an end, as Mr. Burns had been. There was nothing he wanted that he could not find at the Villa des Bijoux. Or so he believed until he knocked on Francie's door, and for an interval afterward, when she had let him in and before he saw the evidence of her hurried packing. But he did not fully understand the significance of Bellini's question until he had asked his own.

"I'm flying back to the States this afternoon," she answered.

He knew then, all at once, not with his single-tracked mind alone but in his heart and stomach. Even then, it took time for him to realize that she was running away from him, and, at long last, why.

He said, "What about your mother?"

"She's staying. I've decided it's time she learned to take care of herself. If she can't, it's the insurance company's worry, not mine. Not any more."

She faced him, her hands clasped in front of her, unsmiling, waiting for him to go. Her hair was disarranged, and there was a smudge of dust on her cheek. It was the first time he had seen her looking like that, the first time he had seen her at all.

He said, "I got away. It's all finished."

"I'm glad."

"Bellini sent his regards."

"That's nice."

She was still waiting for him to leave. He said bluntly, "Why are you going back to the States?"

"It's my home."

"Do I have anything to do with your going?"

"No."

"Would you stay if I asked you to?"

"No."

"Will you come back?"

"No."

"I can follow you."

"It would be a waste of time."

"I'll have to waste it then." He pulled up a chair and sat down with his arms crossed on its back. "Go on with your packing, if your mind is made up. Bellini says I've got a one-track mind, and I know what I want, even if I'm late in finding it out."

"What do you want?"

"You."

"Didn't you hear me say you can't have me?"

It did not discourage him that she had put up another of her protective barriers between them, because he knew how to surmount barriers when the need was desperate. But he was clumsier than usual. The chair he had been sitting in went over with a bang before he reached Francie's side.



David Dodge



DAVID DODGE, author of some of the merriest writing of our day, started his career, surprisingly, as a public accountant. The year was 1935, and Mr. Dodge felt, he says, that this sobersides employment was preferable to starving — though only just.

For seven years, until he joined the Navy after Pearl Harbor, Mr. Dodge labored over his double entries, using his knowledge in two detective stories — *Death and Taxes* and *Shear the Black Sheep*. The detective stories in turn brought him an unexpected capital gain — his publisher's West Coast representative, Elva Keith, whom he married in 1936. A third detective story, *Bullets for the Bridegroom*, helped pay for a new Dodge named Kendal in 1940.

After the war, the family started on a series of travels which have lasted ever since, and which have more than paid for themselves in humorous best-selling travel books like *How Green Was My Father* and *20,000 Leagues Behind the 8 Ball*. At the moment, the peripatetic Dodges have settled down in France, in the atmosphere Mr. Dodge brings so vividly to life in *To Catch a Thief*.

